Francois Villon :: gender, psychoanalysis and metaphor in the middle ages

Croll, Luke

François Villon : Gender, Psychoanalysis and Metaphor in the Middle Ages

1 vol.

LUKE CROLL

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM, DEPT. OF FRENCH

2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

'Ceste matiere a tous ne plest' (*Le Testament*, 267)

Castration, homosexuality, extra-marital relationships, warring spouses, sadomasochism, oral sex, imprisonment, pimps, prostitutes and general debauchery. These are but some of the scabrous themes of the fifteenth-century texts that are the focus of this study: the work of François Villon, the anonymous *Quinze Joyes de mariage* and the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, a work narrated by various lords at the court of the Duke of Burgundy, Philippe le Bon. Could fifteenth-century texts ever be so exciting? The answer is indeed 'yes'. Fifteenth-century audiences enjoyed these racy tales as much as any twenty-first century citizen sitting down to watch the latest instalment of a favourite soap opera. Michael Freeman suggests that the *Lais* may have begun as entertainment in the taverns of Paris,[1] and whilst we can only speculate on the reasons behind the composition of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, the proposition that they were told as humorous stories at court is an entirely reasonable one, given their bawdy subject matter and the all-male atmosphere of the ducal court.

The primary focus of this thesis is the work of François Villon. The thesis examines existing interpretations of his work, concentrating on issues of gender and sexuality, in addition to the language used to describe these issues, such as the representations of male power through phallic symbolism. Although the *Testament* may be much shorter than the *CNn*, for example, it is still a rich source of material to allow us to understand how sexuality was implicitly theorized in the Middle Ages. My subsidiary texts are used to reinforce and give a better understanding of Villon's work, as they provide

[1] See Michael Freeman, *François Villon in his Works: The Villain's Tale* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), p. 12.

additional examples of themes and imagery to support my study. Of course, there are a multitude of texts from the Middle Ages that could have been chosen to accompany Villon. However, given that this thesis is centred upon erotica and the inversion of traditional gender roles, these texts provide excellent thematic reinforcement. The *CNn* have a wide range of sexual themes, including scatology, voyeurism and adultery. The narrators also look at the reversal of gender roles, which occurs more prominently in the *Quinze Joyes de mariage*. Both texts look at the importance of the phallus as a symbol of male power and dominance over the female, and these themes and issues are also patent in the work of Villon, meaning that these three key texts accompany each other very well.

François Villon has generated an enormous amount of critical and creative interest in various languages over the years, but it appears that Villon criticism is continuing to grow even now, entering the twenty-first century. Originally, critical work centred on the biographical approach, with the idea that the *Testament* and the *Lais* were autobiographical works that would explain the life of their author. Since biographical information on Villon is scarce, this led to critics making jumps that may be hard to justify. Using the text to explain Villon and Villon to explain the text can make for confusing and circular argumentation, yet we must still be aware of the influence of the author. As Cholakian puts it, 'while one can certainly fall into the naïve position of equating creator and creator's fictional voice, to argue that they are unrelated is to argue that the text writes itself'.[2]

[2] Rouben C. Cholakian, 'The (Un)naming Process in Villon's *Grand Testament*', *The French Review*, 66 (1992), 216-228 (p. 226).

Two particular contributions, those of Pierre Champion[3] and Louis Thuasne,[4] have provided an enormous amount of critical information about the legatees and the Paris of the time, but it was not until 1967 that a major shift in Villon criticism occurred. David Mus's work, *La Poétique de François Villon,*[5] read the *Testament* in a very different way, moving away from the biographical and historical approach and introducing a heavily sexualised reading. Mus's book, generally considered one of the landmarks of Villonian criticism, will be discussed in greater detail in the first chapter. In 1974, although the work was originally written at approximately the same time as that of Mus, Evelyn Birge Vitz published *The Crossroad of Intentions,*[6] a study of symbolism in the *Testament*. These interpretations are markedly different to previous critical trends. Whilst both texts provide interesting readings, there is also a danger of going too far in a sexual interpretation. Vitz justifies her view by referring to the cumulative effect of symbols. She states that 'a symbolic equivalence, once established between two words or objects, extends in its general effect to other words with more or less the same meaning, or to words pertaining to the same domain of reality'.[7] However, a reader of her work could be led to believe that Villon thought of nothing but sexual allusions, scatological puns and erotic jokes. A sword can never be a sword, but is always a phallus, states Vitz – 'the symbolic meaning of the *branc* of strophe XCIX will make itself felt every time we meet a sword, by whatever name'.[8] This is a dangerous assumption. As much as Villon was a skilled wordsmith, and liked to include jokes in his text, to credit him with a sexual meaning every time he

---

[3] Pierre Champion, *François Villon, sa vie et son temps*, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1933).
[4] *François Villon: Œuvres,* ed. by L. Thuasne (Paris: Picard, 1923).
[5] David Mus (*olim* David Kuhn), *La Poétique de François Villon* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1992 [Paris: Armand Colin, 1967]).
[6] Evelyn Birge Vitz, *The Crossroad of Intentions: A Study of Symbolic Expression in the Poetry of François Villon* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).
[7] Vitz, p. 29.
[8] Vitz, p. 31.

refers to a sword, dagger or other weapon with phallic connotations would appear to be doing him a disservice and unnecessarily eliminating the possibility of alternative meanings. There are undoubtedly sexual allusions and jokes within Villon's work, but whether or not they are as omnipresent as some critics would claim merits further discussion. Indeed, at one point, Vitz contradicts herself, saying that 'it would most certainly be abusive to assert that every time we meet in the text one of the words which I have discussed it is explicitly or even implicitly sexual'.[9]

The work of Pierre Guiraud also demonstrates the risks of being carried away on a wave of enthusiasm. Keen to explain many of the stanzas according to a code he himself had devised, Guiraud claims that 'le sujet du *Testament* est donc une philippique contre les membres de la confrérie des fellateurs qui brutalisent leurs compagnons au mépris de la règle et que le poète voue à des représailles posthumes'.[10] Guiraud's sexual interpretations of the names of the legatees appear far-fetched and he later issued a partial recantation in his second book.[11] John Fox, an advocate of the biographical approach, suggests that 'each method testifies more to the fertile brain of its twentieth-century inventor than to the medieval texts which they torture so cruelly'.[12] It is a very interesting exercise to read Fox's books on Villon, the first of which was published in 1962,[13] and then to read Mus's, in 1967, to see the differences in approach and style. To take but one example, John Fox has a plain and simple interpretation of stanzas XCV and XCVI, writing about how 'the lack of a door accounted for Villon's loss there of a paving-stone and a hoe handle: Cornu is

---

[9] Vitz, p. 41.
[10] Pierre Guiraud, *Le Jargon de Villon ou le gai savoir de la Coquille* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 297.
[11] Pierre Guiraud, *Le 'Testament' de Villon ou le gai savoir de la Basoche* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 71.
[12] John Fox, *Villon: Poems* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1984), p. 103.
[13] John Fox, *The Poetry of Villon* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962).

sure to spend a bloody awful night there.'[14] Mus, on the other hand, takes a much more sexual approach, reading the door as the vagina, the hoe handle as the penis and rather than Cornu spending an unpleasant night there, Villon literally had a bloody night, as he lost his penis in the woman's vagina![15] This shows a distinct clash of approaches.

Books, articles and monographs have continued to appear over the years and it is undeniable that sexuality features prominently in them, with studies by Yvan G. Lepage,[16] David Fein[17] and Christine Martineau-Génieys[18] amongst others examining the homosexual references in the *Testament*. This is a more recent trend and seems to have become more popular as homosexuality has become increasingly accepted in today's society. LePage concentrates on the relationship between Thibault d'Aussigny and Villon, and also discusses in detail the stanzas relating to the *frères* Perdrier and the *ballade des langues envieuses*, arguing that 'les frères Perdrier, ces « langues envieuses », auraient dangereusement compromis Villon en révélant son appétence homosexuelle'.[19] LePage acknowledges that his study 'ne satisfera pas tout le monde'[20] but states that he wanted to answer some of the questions that the presence of homosexuality poses, since according to him, Jean Dufournet has shown 'd'une façon convaincante'[21] that homosexuality is present in the text. Therefore,'il paraît

[14] Fox, 1984, p. 86.
[15] Mus, pp. 426-7.
[16] Yvan G. Lepage, 'François Villon et l'homosexualité', in *Homosexual Themes in Literary Studies*, ed. by Wayne R. Dynes and Stephen Donaldson (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 203-23.
[17] David A. Fein, *A Reading of Villon's 'Testament'* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1984).
[18] Christine Martineau-Génieys, 'L'homosexualité dans le *Lais* et le *Testament* de Villon' in *Conformité et déviances au Moyen Age: actes du deuxième colloque international de Montpellier*, Université Paul-Valéry, ed. by Marcel Faure (Montpellier: Association CRISIMA, 1995), pp. 235-251.
[19] LePage, p. 221.
[20] LePage, p. 222.
[21] LePage, p. 222.

normal qu'on cherche à savoir pourquoi elle s'y trouve et quel rôle elle y joue'.[22] Dufournet, of course, is one of the leading Villon scholars of recent years and his detailed *Recherches*[23] provide many different interpretations of the most confusing and tortuous passages of Villon's texts.

David Fein takes a different approach. Following David Mus, he studies the *ballade de conclusion*, but whilst Mus suggests that the passage describes Villon's 'membre fidèle qui "mâle-ment" point le nez en l'air',[24] Fein suggests that Villon is the victim of a 'brutal sexual assault', as 'the image of the tongue of the belt buckle (*ranguillon*) unequivocably connotes phallic penetration, especially in the context of a ballad filled with sexual innuendoes'.[25] This is certainly a possible reading of the ballade, but Leo Spitzer's discussion of the physiological effects of hanging – an involuntary erection[26] - must also be taken into account. Spitzer's view is supported by that of Walter Blue,[27] although Blue's hyperbolic writing somewhat undermines his assertions. Statements such as 'he has spilled his seed in many a reddish furrow'[28] and 'Villone [a reference to the acrostic in the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot*] is a hellish creature, a perverted blend of two personalities in one – Villon and his sterile whore. It is death'[29] serve more to raise a smile than as convincing persuasion.

---

[22] LePage, p. 222.
[23] See Jean Dufournet, *Recherches sur le 'Testament' de François Villon*, 2 vols, 2nd rev. ed. (Paris: Sedes, 1973) and *Nouvelles recherches sur Villon* (Paris: Champion, 1980).
[24] Mus, p. 333.
[25] David A. Fein, 'The Povre Villon and other martyred lovers of the *Testament*', *Neophilologus*, 64 (1980), 347-357 (p. 356).
[26] Leo Spitzer, 'Sur le v. 2015 du *Testament* de Villon', *Romania*, 65 (1939), 101-3.
[27] Walter Blue, 'François Villon: Love's Sterile/Fertile Martyr' in *Poetics of Love in the Middle Ages: Text and Contexts,* ed. by Moshe Lazar and Norris J. Lacy (Fairfax: George Mason University Press, 1989), pp. 29-35.
[28] Blue, p. 31.
[29] Blue, p. 34.

Christine Martineau-Génieys' article is the most in-depth discussion of the alleged homosexual aspects of the *Testament*. She considers the Thibault d'Aussigny-Villon relationship, but also introduces some new ideas, proposing that the reference to the 'tallemouze' in line 1073 is actually a suggestion of fellatio[30] and that the Orfevre de Boys was in reality a member of the sadomasochistic community.[31] Furthermore, in what appears to be an attempt to erase women from the *Testament,* she argues that Villon and Ythier Marchant were lovers,[32] and that the *Ballade a s'amye* was written for him.[33] It would appear that some of these claims are based on tenuous linguistic evidence, but there is unquestionably a basis for further discussion here. It is testimony to the ambiguous nature of Villon's poetry that so many lines, words and phrases can have so many interpretations. Indeed, Jean Dufournet finds at least five possible readings of line 12, 'je ne suis son serf ne sa biche', the line which first raises the possibility of a homosexual aspect of the *Testament.*[34] They range from the idea of Villon being hunted by the bishop to Villon being the bishop's lover and Villon rejecting the enrichment of the bishop through the payment of fines or taxes to him. Dufournet states that this choice 'permet de multiplier les suggestions dans une image volontairement composite que les lecteurs peuvent simplifier ou compliquer à leur gré, d'une lecture naïve (le gibier que l'évêque n'a pas le droit de chasser) à une lecture symbolique plus profonde'.[35]

---

[30] Martineau-Génieys, p. 237.
[31] Martineau-Génieys, p. 239.
[32] Martineau-Génieys, p. 245.
[33] Martineau-Génieys, p. 250.
[34] Jean Dufournet, *Nouvelles recherches sur Villon* (Paris: Champion, 1980), pp. 17-28.
[35] Jean Dufournet, 'Le Bestiaire de Villon' in *Epopée animale, fable, fabliau: actes du IVe Colloque de la Société internationale renardienne, Evreux, 7-11 septembre 1981*, ed. by Gabriel Bianciotto and Michel Salvat (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), pp. 179-95 (p. 193).

As we know from historical information, Villon had friends in the criminal underworld of the day who were part of the Coquillards, and it has been alleged that Villon himself was a member of this group.[36] Whether he was or not is irrelevant to the present topic, but he did compose ballades in criminal slang, known as the *Ballades en jargon.* There have been various interpretations of these ballades, some of which still pose problems for the modern reader, but a notable suggestion is that they are actually homosexual ballades.[37] Again, it would appear that the basis for this assertion is dubious. However, it may not be as questionable as the following declaration by Gert Pinkernell – '[...] culte de beauté et hantise d'un vieillissement prématuré, peuvent d'ailleurs figurer parmi les nombreux indices, qui, dans l'œuvre de Villon, semblent témoigner de son homosexualité. Car l'on sait l'importance particulière qu'ont, pour beaucoup d'homosexuels, la beauté et la jeunesse'.[38] Pinkernell seems to be working from a preconceived stereotype of homosexuals and his interpretation is too personal to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, the allegations of homosexuality and 'moeurs spéciales' refuse to go away and will be a key part of this study.

Over-reliance on the biographical aspect is in decline, but there are still examples of critics trying to explain the historical Villon through the *Testament.* Indeed, some critics, such as Martineau-Génieys, allege that Villon was a homosexual himself, whereas others deny it. Whilst the idea of veiled allusions of homosexuality as regards influential figures such as Thibault d'Aussigny can certainly be accepted, suggestions

---

[36] Jean Deroy, *François Villon coquillard et auteur dramatique* (Paris: Nizet, 1977).
[37] Thierry Martin, *Villon: Ballades en argot homosexuel* (Paris: Editions Mille et une nuits, 1998).
[38] Gert Pinkernell, *François Villon et Charles d'Orléans (1457 à 1461): d'après les 'Poésies diverses', de Villon* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1992), p. 99, n. 30.

that Villon suffered a homosexual rape in the last ballade of the *Testament*[39] or that he was attempting to 'out' powerful figures of his time[40] seem more far-fetched. John Fox, an eminent Villonian, reminds us that 'there is no need to be side-tracked into hypothetical meanings'.[41] Whilst there is no doubt that Fox has put forward thought-provoking ideas about Villon's poetry, his dismissal of some modern critical ideas proposed may be unduly harsh. Fox is very much a proponent of the idea of 'Villon as everyman'; the idea that Villon was a poet whose works are relevant even now, hundreds of years after they were originally written. He writes:

> He has condensed into his terse, hard-hitting lines feelings that are common to us all, feelings that can never be alien because they arise entirely from the human condition ...[42]

Whilst this is a thought-provoking idea, it also depends on just how much sincerity one can find in Villon's verse. Was he writing the *Testament* as a serious work, as a form of catharsis, for example? Was it just an example of his poetic talent? Was it to make money? We will never know. My examination of the imagery employed by Villon will take into account the arguments proposed on both sides of the critical divide.

New editions of Villon's poetry continue to appear on a regular basis. The most recent is Jean-Claude Mühlethaler's 2004 volume,[43] which is particularly interesting due to

---

[39] Fein, 1980, p. 356.
[40] Martineau-Génieys, p. 243.
[41] Fox, 1984, p. 102.
[42] Fox, 1984, p. 104.
[43] *Lais, Testament, Poésies Diverses avec Ballades en jargon*, ed. by Jean-Claude Mühlethaler (Paris: Champion, 2004).

his deviations from accepted textual variants, including a slight expansion of the *Testament*, through the addition of the *epistre* and the *Probleme* or *Ballade de fortune*. Mühlethaler uses a manuscript usually known as C, located in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.[44] He states that since 'nous suivons fidèlement ce manuscrit [...], nous transcrivons la ballade ici, ainsi que le *Probleme* (ou *Ballade de Fortune*) qui lui fait suite'.[45] This is an interesting approach, since the majority of modern editions conclude the *Testament*, with, fittingly, the *Ballade de conclusion* (a title supplied by Clément Marot, of course). Furthermore, one of the most established lines in the *Lais* is 'je m'en vois a Angers' (43), but, using the Stockholm manuscript,[46] Mühlethaler changes this to 'je m'en vois a dangiers', providing a different reading. This understanding would deny a possible pun suggested by David Mus,[47] on Angers, and will merit further discussion. Mühlethaler also sees a link between the name 'le gros Marquet' in line 1830 and the phallic symbol suggested by 'maquette'.[48] However, his edition is weakened in places by his failure to elaborate in his textual notes. Writing, for example, 'certains y ont vu une métaphore érotique'[49] in relation to the tenor bell of line 1905, is useful, but it would be more useful to be told exactly who those 'certains' were.

Despite the growth in the use of Lacanian, Freudian and other psychoanalytic theories within film studies, its use in Villon criticism – apart from at its most basic level

---

[44] BnF, fr. 20041. Facsimile: A. Jeanroy and E. Droz, *Deux manuscrits de François Villon (Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 1661 et 20041)*, (Paris: Droz, 1932).
[45] Mühlethaler, p. 278.
[46] Stockholm, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. V.u.22. Facsimile: *Le Petit et le Grant Testament de Francoys Villon, les cinq ballades en jargon et des poèmes du cercle de Villon, etc.: Reproduction en fac-similé du manuscrit de Stockholm,* intro. by M. Schwob (Paris: Champion, 1905).
[47] Mus, p. 134.
[48] Mühlethaler, p. 273.
[49] Mühlethaler, p. 275.

through phallic symbolism – is limited. R. Yve-Plessis[50] and Dr. Pierre Lôo[51] have published psychological works, going as far as to suggest that Villon was suffering from a split personality disorder, but these arguments are difficult to sustain in the light of more recent work on Villon, and use little psychoanalytic theory. The only commentary employing modern psychoanalytic theory is Merrit R. Blakeslee's brief *Essai de lecture freudienne* of Villon's work.[52] Blakeslee immediately points out that he treats Villon's poetry as fiction and not autobiography, emphasising that he is examining Villon's poetic persona, something that the earlier critics failed to do. Unfortunately, some of Blakeslee's statements are of a dubious nature, such as his suggestion that line 1806, 'il fut rez chief, barbe, sourcil' and lines 1964-5 'trop plus me fait mal c'onques maiz/ Barbe, cheveux, penil' could be an 'allusion oblique à la castration'.[53] A chapter entitled 'Villon's *'La Ballade des Pendus'* and its symbolic nuclear principle', is devoted to Villon and psychoanalysis in Patrick Mahony's book, *Psychoanalysis and Discourse*.[54] Since this study's main focus is the *Testament* and not the *Poésies diverses*, Mahony's book is not of particular relevance. Furthermore, its worth is undermined by some alarming misreadings, such as Mahony's claim that Jesus, evoked in the envoy of the ballade, 'is another hanged victim'.[55] At great length, one could adumbrate possible justification for this claim but Mahony's evidence is distinctly exiguous.

There are no other detailed discussions of concepts such as gender roles and their possible reversal, homosociality, patriarchy and castration anxiety within the existing

---

[50] R. Yve-Plessis, *La Psychose de François Villon* (Paris: Jean Schemit, 1925).
[51] Dr. Pierre Lôo, *Villon: Etude psychologique et médico-légale* (Paris: Vigot Freres, 1947).
[52] Merritt R. Blakeslee, 'Le *Lais* et le *Testament* de François Villon: Essai de lecture freudienne', *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 5 (1982), 1-8.
[53] Blakeslee, p. 8.
[54] Patrick Mahony, *Psychoanalysis and Discourse* (London and New York: Tavistock Books, 1989).
[55] Mahony, p. 236.

body of Villonian criticism. It is crucial to be aware that the use of psychoanalytic theory within medieval literature can be seen as somewhat anachronistic, but in the introduction to his *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, Simon Gaunt refutes this, stating that 'we should not assume that all good ideas are the result of modern brain-waves' and that 'medieval texts do not theorize gender in the same way as us, but this does not mean that they do not theorize it at all'.[56] On the other hand, John Fox warns that '[we] are too easily influenced by Freudian-based fantasies' and that it is necessary to be cautious when dealing with 'eroticisms *never noticed hitherto*'.[57] Fox's note of caution should certainly be borne in mind, but since these theories are starting to be used for the study of other medieval texts (such as *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles,* discussed below), there is no reason why they cannot be applied to Villon as well.

The other texts that form the basis of this project have been the focus of much less critical attention. *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, though commented upon in journal articles, has been the subject of very few book-length studies, notably those of Dubuis and Fein. Dubuis' long and detailed work appeared in 1973,[58] but thirty years passed before David Fein's book[59] was published. Fein looks at selected tales (1, 28, 33, 38, 43, 55, and 99) in order to study concepts such as gender roles. Fein's stories all 'involve an attempt to subvert authority, to re-establish control, or to realign oneself in a new relationship'.[60] Since Fein uses theories that are one of the main thrusts of

---

[56] Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 20.
[57] Fox, 1984, p. 101.
[58] Roger Dubuis, *'Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles' et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au Moyen Age* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1973).
[59] David Fein, *Displacements of Power: Readings from the 'Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles'* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003).
[60] Fein, 2003, p. 10.

this thesis, his work will be discussed in depth, and particularly since Fein has also worked extensively on Villon, there exists the possibility of drawing parallels between the two texts, especially in terms of the subversion of power, and the reversal of gender roles through the supposedly dominant male role being usurped by the usually subordinate female.

In his *Iconography of Power,*[61] David LaGuardia devotes a chapter to the study of homosociality in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, but some basic errors give the chapter an unreliable feel. For example, LaGuardia misreads the first story. In it, a wife is having an extramarital affair with her neighbour. The husband goes away and the wife goes next door to have sex with the neighbour. On his return, the husband goes to pay his neighbour a visit. LaGuardia claims that 'the husband demands to see his neighbour's wife in her most intimate place, her marital bed'.[62] In fact, he does not, since no wedding has taken place and the narrator has not mentioned a wedding, even in passing. LaGuardia refers to everything linked to the Duke of Burgundy as 'royal',[63] when the correct term is 'ducal', and also makes several assertions that appear tenuous, such as the idea that 'a gentleman had to master the art of telling a specific story about women in order to circulate in the network of relations of a male-dominated social hierarchy'[64]. This is disappointing, as there are undoubtedly many enriching interpretations that can be found through the application of modern psychoanalytic critical apparatus to these medieval texts.

[61] David LaGuardia, *The Iconography of Power* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999).
[62] LaGuardia, p. 61.
[63] LaGuardia, p. 54.
[64] LaGuardia, p. 57.

A new critical edition of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* (to be published by Memini) is being prepared by Luciano Rossi, who is also compiling a bibliography, but there is no publication date available at the time of writing. For this reason, the most modern critical edition to date is that of Franklin P. Sweetser.[65] Interestingly, for unknown reasons, LaGuardia does not use this edition, turning instead to an anthology.[66]

In his *La Bouche et le corps,*[67] Luca Pierdominici brings together the three key texts (the *Testament,* the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* and the *Quinze Joyes de mariage)* that are also being examined in this project. Discussing the first two texts through the conception and portrayal of the body in each, although drawing few specific parallels, Pierdominici discusses many of the terms used as euphemisms or circumlocutions for the sexual act or sexual parts of the body. He also devotes a chapter to the study of the *Quinze Joyes*. This excellent work will serve as a useful support for arguments proposed in this thesis and Pierdominici's work will be referred to and discussed in detail. A special mention must also go to Pierre-André Beauchamp's article on the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles.*[68] His main focus is the carnivalesque aspects of the stories in relation to ideas proposed by Bakhtin. Despite the fact that the carnivalesque is not part of this study, it will be important nonetheless to refer to Beauchamp's article, due to his detailed classification of the instances of obscenity and deviancy in the text, and the vocabulary used to refer to them.

---

[65] *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, ed. by Franklin P. Sweetser (Geneva: Droz, 1966). Further references will be marked as *CNn.*

[66] *Conteurs français du XVIe siècle*, ed. by Pierre Jourda (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).

[67] Luca Pierdominici, *La Bouche et le corps: Images littéraires du Quinzième siècle français* (Paris: Champion, 2003).

[68] Pierre-André Beauchamp, 'Procédés et thèmes carnavalesques dans les *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*', *Le Moyen Français*, 1 (1977), 90-118.

Whilst there have been several translations of the *Quinze Joyes de mariage*, only a handful of critical editions and scholarly articles have appeared. The editions by Joan Crow[69] and Jean Rychner,[70] provide only limited background information and textual notes, and are not informed by modern critical insights. Although no new critical edition is to be published, Luca Pierdominici includes an ample bibliography, which should be considered reasonably comprehensive, in his study.[71] Other articles[72] deal with sexual dynamics and social functions. Since this work will examine the subversion of patriarchy and the reversal of gender roles in fifteenth-century works, these articles will be of great use.

Another excellent medieval source is the latest edition of Guillaume Tardif's translation of Poggio Bracciolini's *Liber Facetiarum.*[73] The glossary of this edition provides useful definitions of words employed by Tardif and must be considered the definitive resource for Tardif's translation, as well as an excellent resource for erotic vocabulary, second only to Rose M. Bidler's *Dictionnaire érotique*,[74] an erotic dictionary compiled using a wide range of medieval sources.

Finally, the study will encompass the *Sermons joyeux*, which are a rich source of sexual imagery and share thematic links. The key text is Jelle Koopmans' *Recueil de sermons joyeux,*[75] a large compendium of sermons, preceded by his smaller *Quatre*

---

[69] *Les Quinze Joyes de mariage*, ed. by Joan Crow (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969). Further references to this edition will be marked as *QJm*.
[70] *Les Quinze Joyes de mariage*, ed. by Jean Rychner (Geneva: Droz, 1963).
[71] Pierdominici, 2003.
[72] For example, Guy Mermier's 'La ruse féminine et la fonction sociale des *Quinze Joyes de mariage*', *Romance Notes*, 15 (1973-4), 495-503.
[73] Guillaume Tardif, *Les Facecies de Poge: traduction du 'Liber facetiarum' de Poggio Bracciolini*, ed. by Frédéric Duval and Sandrine Hériché-Pradeau (Geneva: Droz, 2003).
[74] Rose M. Bidler, *Dictionnaire érotique: ancien français, moyen français, Renaissance* (Montreal: Ceres, 2002).
[75] *Recueil de sermons joyeux*, ed. by Jelle Koopmans (Geneva : Droz, 1988).

Sermons joyeux.[76] These mock sermons were classed as a sub-genre of the farce or the 'sottie' and as such, have rarely been discussed as works in their own right. J.-C. Aubailly has analysed this genre as a whole in his work on monologue, dialogue and the 'sottie',[77] but finding critical material on the *Sermons joyeux* other than that by Koopmans or Verhuyck is more difficult. J. Denais,[78] S. L. Gilman,[79] W. W. Heist[80] and S. M. Taylor[81] have written specifically on them, but apart from Koopmans' brief summaries of each sermon, very little critical ink has been spilt on the erotic imagery of the texts. This study will draw parallels between the images contained and vocabulary used in the various sermons, such as Molinet's *Sermon joyeux de saint Billouard* (studied by David Cowling)[82] or the *Sermon joyeux de saint Jambon et de sainte Andouille*, both of which have heavily sexual connotations.

The methodology to be employed in this study is somewhat eclectic. It is not simply an analysis of the key texts using metaphor theory; although there is no doubt that this alone would make for a rewarding and enriching study of the literature of the fifteenth century. Indeed, various works have already examined individual metaphors within the corpus, including Luca Pierdominici's study of representations of the body in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* and the *Testament.*[83] Work such as this has laid the necessary foundations upon which I will base my study and which I will develop in

---

[76] *Quatre Sermons joyeux,* ed. by Jelle Koopmans (Geneva: Droz, 1984).
[77] J.-C. Aubailly, *Le Monologue, le dialogue et la sottie: Essai sur quelques genres dramatiques de la fin du Moyen Age et du début du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1976).
[78] J. Denais, 'Le monologue et le sermon joyeux dans l'ancien théâtre français', *Revue d'Art dramatique*, 19 (1980), 193-202.
[79] S. L. Gilman, *The Parodic Sermon in European Perspective: Aspects of Liturgical Parody from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974).
[80] W. W. Heist, *Sermon Joyeux and Polemic: Two Sixteenth Century Applications of the Legend of the Fifteen Signs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).
[81] S. M. Taylor, 'Saints for Sinners: The Transitional Role of the XVth Century *Sermon Joyeux*', *Fifteenth Century Studies,* 8 (1983), 211-226.
[82] David Cowling, *Building the Text: Architecture as Metaphor in Late Medieval and Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 42-47.
[83] Pierdominici, 2003.

even more depth, but it is now essential to employ further critical theory to expand our understanding of the texts.

For this reason, this study turns to psychoanalysis, which has recently been used in the field of film studies with great success, with the theories being applied to films as diverse as *Rear Window*, *Huevos de oro*, *Desperately Seeking Susan* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Furthermore, the study will encompass an analysis of gender roles in the texts, profiting from theories such as castration anxiety, patriarchy, homosociality and the lesbian continuum. Whilst not all of these issues are applicable to each text, when the corpus is considered as a whole, a clear portrait of gender-related and psychoanalytic issues appears.

In 1975, Laura Mulvey published her groundbreaking article entitled 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.[84] For the first time, she put forward ideas on how to employ psychoanalysis to examine and study the patriarchal order - this is to say, society controlled by men in which men use their power to their own advantage. She points out the importance of looking and the idea of the gendered gaze, i.e. 'woman as image, man as bearer of the look'.[85] Essentially, a woman cannot look herself; she can only be looked at. Mulvey argues that 'woman as representation signifies castration, inducing voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms [for men] to circumvent her threat'.[86] The woman, of course, symbolizes castration due to her real absence of a penis. For the unconscious, she has no penis, therefore has been castrated. The unconscious does not recognise the biological difference between man and woman, but accepts the

[84] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn 1975), 6-18.
[85] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 22-34 (p. 27) [reprint of above cited article].
[86] Mulvey, p. 32.

penis as a requisite. The idea of the castration complex comes from Freudian psychoanalysis, where it refers to 'an unconscious group of ideas that appears in response to the child's confrontation with the fact of anatomical differences between the sexes, which he or she explains with the hypothesis that the woman's penis has been cut off'.[87] We will see that in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* and the work of Villon, much emphasis is put on the act of looking, particularly in terms of the scopophilic instinct ('pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object')[88] and voyeurism – illicitly watching other people without their knowledge. For example, in the first two *nouvelles*, we see men gazing upon the naked buttocks of women. The importance of voyeurism in the medieval period has already been examined by several critics, most notably A. C. Spearing in his *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur*.[89] In the first chapter, Spearing states that he does not commit himself to any 'single theory', since he wishes to 'retain freedom of manoeuvre in deploying the large categories in terms of which the field is defined'.[90] In that respect, our studies are similar. Spearing does not discuss any of the key texts of this thesis, but there are areas in which this study will refer to his.

Fetishism is an important concept in this study. The theory refers to the notion of 'over-investment' in parts of the body. In our modern era, we talk of 'foot fetishists' to refer to those who have a particular sexual attraction to the feet, for example. However, in a psychoanalytic context, the male seeks to find the 'missing phallus' in the woman. He cannot accept that a penis cannot be there, since this is a threat to his masculinity. Given that the phallus is lost, this can be seen as a reference to castration,

[87] *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 39.
[88] Mulvey, p. 32.
[89] A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[90] Spearing, p. 2.

as explained by Mulvey. The more phallic symbols that appear, the more it demonstrates the level of threat that the male may feel. According to many Villon scholars, there are a plethora of phallic symbols within his work. Is Villon therefore seeking to avoid the threat of castration and attempting to continue the power of patriarchy? Is he attempting to reassert a masculinity that has been besieged by women, as the 'povre Villon' persona of the narrator would have us believe? In this case, we can adduce the notion of the 'phallic woman'. A good example of the phallic woman is the 'femme fatale' figure often found in cinema. Dangerous, powerful and able to operate easily in traditionally male spheres of influence, the phallic woman can be seen as controlling and castrating. She dominates the male figure. If 'povre Villon' has suffered at the hands of strong, powerful women, we could argue for the phallic nature of Katherine de Vausselles, for example.

The lesbian continuum is a term coined by Adrienne Rich, a Canadian feminist, in her essay 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence'.[91] She describes it as:

> a range - through each woman's life and throughout history - of woman-identified experience, not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support, if we can hear in it such associations as *marriage resistance* and the "haggard" behaviour identified by Mary Daly, ... we begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology

[91] Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (London: Virago, 1986), pp. 23-75.

> which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of *lesbianism*.[92]

It can therefore be used as resistance to heterosexuality and male hegemony. We can see clear examples of the lesbian continuum in the *Quinze Joyes de mariage* and the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, as women come together to outwit their husbands and succeed in dominating them, rather than vice versa. Villon's *Testament*, however, gives us a different perspective, since it is told in the first person. The testator presents a biased account, suggesting Villon's mistreatment by multiple women. However, as we often have occasion to distrust the strict veracity of the *Testament*, we must ask if the lesbian continuum is present in his work or not.

Homosociality, a term defined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, is based on Rich's concept of the lesbian continuum. She applies the term 'male homosocial desire' to 'such activities as "male bonding", which may ... be characterized by intense homophobia'.[93] It can therefore apply to groups such as male politicians, soldiers, business partners and athletes. Homosociality is a key part of patriarchy, which Heidi Hartmann defines as a 'set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women'.[94] Thus, Kosofsky Sedgwick points out that in the case of a love triangle, when two men are appearing to compete for one woman, it may actually disguise a bond and repressed desire between the two men. The homosexuality-homosociality dichotomy means that this is a

---

[92] Rich, pp. 51-52. The emphasis is Rich's.
[93] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 1.
[94] Heidi Hartmann, 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union', in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. by Lydia Sargent (Boston: South End, 1981), p.14.

platonic bond, in which the two men wish to enjoy male company. David LaGuardia has already devoted a chapter to the study of homosociality in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles,*[95] but this study will go further, taking into account the LaGuardia study and looking at homosociality in Villon, examining the absence of homosociality and the presence of the lesbian continuum, or vice versa.

As stated above, metaphor theory will also be a key part of this study. Excellent works by George Lakoff and Mark Turner[96] and Zoltán Kövecses[97] have examined metaphor theory and changed the way in which we look at metaphor, both in linguistic studies and in daily life. Conceptual metaphors are integral to general life. They are classified within the cognitivist tradition using capital letters, such as THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING, or THE BODY IS FOOD. As Kövecses puts it, 'a conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another'[98] – i.e., the source domain and the target domain. They do not represent a specific metaphorical linguistic expression, but are the basis for many common expressions using these semantic fields. In the case of Villon, he uses the female genitals as his target domain and by referring to the 'huys' or 'logis', he links to the source domain of the larger THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING conceptual metaphor. Through this process of mapping of metaphors, or correspondences, what we know of doors ('huys') is transferred to the vulva. The door is used to gain access to the building, just as the vulva is used, in the sexual act, to enter the body. In another semantic field, what we know of swords is transferred to the penis if we look at references to 'dagues' and 'passots'. Although the specific

[95] LaGuardia, 1999.
[96] George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
[97] Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[98] Kövecses, p. 4.

word may change, whether we are talking about a dagger or a broadsword, our knowledge of swords allows us to better understand the reference to the penis and the association with the general conceptual metaphor is still there.

Idioms are also often metaphorical. To take one of Kövecses' examples, if we say that 'he works for the local branch of the bank', we are referring to the conceptual metaphor of SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS.[99] Many of these metaphors have existed for hundreds of years. David Cowling, writing on literary portrayals of the body as a building, points out that it dates 'from before Vitruvius',[100] i.e. from before the first century. Continuing with our THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING example, the male and female bodies are described as buildings at least ten times in the key texts of this study, with considerable overlap. The various doors and windows belong to this conceptual metaphor through the trope of metonymy, in which a part stands for a whole. Kövecses theorizes this in terms of 'vehicle entity' and 'target entity', in which 'reading Shakespeare' would be the vehicle entity, and 'Shakespeare's works', the target entity.[101]

For Evelyn Vitz and her study of Villon,[102] the accumulation of metaphors poses a problem. She sees the 'contamination' of metaphors throughout the text, stating that this word best describes 'the importance of the proximity in the building up of symbolic nuances and the tenuousness with which words and notions 'taint' each other in Villon's poetry'.[103] Since Vitz's interpretations are going to come under close scrutiny in the rest of this study, it is unnecessary to examine them in detail here.

---

[99] Kövecses, p. 8.
[100] Cowling, p. 17.
[101] Kövecses, p. 145.
[102] Vitz, 1974.
[103] Vitz, p. 29.

However, we see flaws arising in Vitz's analysis, when she writes 'the contamination works backward as well as forward'.[104] Does this therefore mean that we have to read the text backward as well as forward? Obviously, a text can be re-read again and again, but when Vitz is claiming that words are tainted by references over 500 lines earlier, this is highly doubtful. For example, she discusses lines 1190-1197, the references to 'caige vert', which can be interpreted to mean a mistress. However, she then claims that '"cage" also pulls the notion of 'trap', 'nets', into the sexual sphere'[105] by referring to lines 673-680. This appears a peculiar approach. Whilst Vitz has proposed some interesting ideas, many of them do not stand up to increased scrutiny, as will be shown later in this work.

The first chapter of this thesis will look at sexuality in Villon, examining his bequests to his legatees, as well as studying the sexuality of the testator persona as he interacts with other characters, such as la Grosse Margot. It will pay special attention to the allegations of homosexuality made by modern critics and will demonstrate that possible attempts to "out" Villon as a homosexual are a product of contemporary critical trends. Because of this, it requires many references to the various critical works and will see opposing critical views analysed in an attempt to bring a more rounded view. Extreme views will also be examined. This chapter will draw parallels with other fifteenth-century texts that feature sexuality heavily, such as the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* and the *Sermons joyeux*.

The second chapter has as its focus the male, bringing metaphor theory and psychoanalytic concepts related to the male body, such as phallic symbols and

[104] Vitz, p. 32.
[105] Vitz, p. 40.

castration anxiety, to bear on an analysis of the texts of the corpus. It will argue that the supposed male hegemony is, in fact, under threat from women, who do their best to deny the male any safe haven. It will identify a range of phallic symbols in the texts and show how they represent the power of the male, as he seeks to surround himself with them in order to ward off the threat of castration. However, it will also show that the phallus is a transitory object and can move from male to female, bestowing phallic power upon the woman and allowing her to become the dominant figure. The chapter will also argue that as much as the male tries to protect himself from the female through homosociality, he is always thwarted.

In the third chapter, the study will examine the female body and the symbols and concepts related to it. Metaphors to describe the female body and sexual acts are of great importance to the key texts and this chapter will analyse how they work and how we can relate them to modern theories, such as the castrating woman. In turn, this will introduce theories such as the lesbian continuum and a discussion of the struggle of women against perceived patriarchal oppression. Special attention will be paid to the role of women in the *Quinze Joyes de mariage*, where the traditional hierarchical structure of patriarchal society in which the female is subordinate to the male is inverted. It will also take into account the importance of these stories in the tradition of anti-feminist, misogynistic literature and the burgeoning tradition of pro-feminine writing, of which Christine de Pisan was at the forefront.

The conclusion will take an overview of the various texts and the links made between them. This thesis seeks to pose various questions regarding Villon's use of imagery, his originality and whether modern critics are inventing meanings and interpretations,

or if they have managed to find new readings. Having looked at other texts of the period and interpretations of them, a final answer to these questions will be proposed. The importance of the suitability of register and vocabulary will be examined and the advantages of the application of psychoanalytic theories to the literature of the past will be discussed.

Chapter 1: Sexuality

For modern-day society, the idea of homosexuality appears comparatively recent. After all, why would there be such shock at a gay kiss shown on television or a lesbian sex scene included in a book? There is a lot of truth in the phrase 'out of sight, out of mind' and until recent years, homosexuality was very much a taboo subject that could not be discussed - only hinted at. Now, with the increasing prominence of homosexuals in today's society, a distinct critical trend is appearing, with a great rise in homosexual literature and literary criticism. There are even attempts to prove that famous figures of the past were gay, for example, Abraham Lincoln.[106]

Of course, homosexuality has existed in society for hundreds, if not thousands, of years and its existence has been studied in numerous books, including John Boswell's excellent *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality.*[107] The Ancient Greeks, for example, were well known for their homosexual practices, and in fact, homosexuality was a licit act, particularly in terms of pederastic love. Yet, an uninformed reader coming to Villon criticism for the first time would find that homosexuality is only mentioned in recent, post-Mus critical works. If we look back at material from the early twentieth century or even before, we find scant reference to the homosexual nature of Villon's poetry. Works from 1967 onwards, however, provide us with a rich tapestry of suggestions of homosexuality to sift through. This is a clear sign that critical interpretations develop according to societal situations. As stated in the introduction, David Mus began the debate with his audacious and daring

[106] C. A. Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Free Press, 2004).
[107] John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

book[108] and his ideas have been developed and expanded upon ever since in increasingly innovative and interesting ways. *La Poétique de François Villon* was a defining moment in Villon criticism.

This chapter seeks to examine the various interpretations proposed by Villon critics. It will concentrate on homosexuality, though other sexual aspects will also be discussed and other texts drawn upon for evidentiary purposes. If such interpretations are possible, why have they not been noticed before? It is crucial to take enormous care with supposedly new eroticisms. Are these critics simply inventing a new meaning or are they discovering one that has been hidden since the fifteenth century? This chapter will attempt to answer these questions.

Villon's poetry is fascinating in that there are several directions that we could take in investigating homosexuality. Firstly, we could look to see if Villon was a homosexual himself. Secondly, we could examine the suggestion that his work is a means of getting revenge on those who have abused and mistreated him, by malevolently labelling them homosexuals. Thirdly, we could study the idea that he was seeking to "out" important people of the period. These are all possible, valid readings of Villon's poetry and this chapter will bring them all together.

The *Testament* opens with a fierce attack on Thibault d'Aussigny, the bishop of Orleans. According to information contained within the *Testament*, he was responsible for Villon's imprisonment in Meung-sur-Loire for an unknown infraction.

[108] Mus, 1967.

This would explain Villon's hatred of him. The testator rejects any power that Thibault might hold over him, before going on to say:

> Je ne suis son serf ne sa biche (12) [109]

This is a deceptively simple binominal expression, as on first glance it appears to be a straightforward pun on the homophony of 'cerf/serf', by which Villon rejects being the property of the bishop, as well as his hind. However, as 'biche' could be used as a term of endearment, it is now possible to see another layer of meaning here. In fact, the phrase is positively polysemantic, given that Jean Dufournet has been able to identify five possible interpretations of the line in the course of his research.[110] The first of these takes Villon as a deer and the bishop as a dog or centaur, hunting him. The second looks at the horns of the deer as a symbol of the cuckold and Dufournet suggests that 'Villon n'accepte pas d'être trompé par l'évêque qui aurait usé de traîtrise à son égard'.[111] In the fourth interpretation, Villon rejects enriching Thibault by paying him taxes or fines, and the fifth possibility is that Villon refuses the bishop's greeting, wishing him dead.

It is, however, the third interpretation that is of the most interest to us. Dufournet writes that 'le cerf passait pour être un animal lascif d'une robustesse à toute épreuve; d'autre part, la femme aimée était comparée à un cerf poursuivi par un ou plusieurs prétendants: Villon ne veut être d'aucune manière le partenaire amoureux de

---

[109] All quotations are from the Jean-Claude Mühlethaler edition, unless otherwise stated. The numbers in brackets refer to the lines of the poem.
[110] Dufournet, 1984, pp. 179-95.
[111] Dufournet, 1984, p. 192.

l'évêque'.[112] In this reading, Villon does not want to be subject to the bishop's homoerotic attentions. These lines have been commented upon in depth in various editions, with the majority of editors, including the most recent, Mühlethaler, agreeing with the possible allusion to the bishop's sexuality. Interestingly, the Rychner and Henry edition of 1974[113] sees no sexual allusion in these lines. They state that 'il ne faut pas, pour la cause, supposer qu'il lance des insinuations malveillantes quant aux moeurs de l'évêque', pointing out his numerous homonymic puns throughout the *Testament*.[114]

Gert Pinkernell's analysis goes even further when he examines line 15 – 'Large ou estroit, moult me fut chiche'. Pinkernell suggests that the true meaning is 'qu'il ait présenté son pénis érigé ou l'anus, Thibault était toujours radin envers moi'.[115] This is the only explanation that takes such an extreme view, and although Villon's poetry seems to pride itself on its density and ambiguity, resisting one single, universal reading, this analysis seems unlikely. Dufournet points out the cleverness of Villon's choice of this metaphor, since it is an image that 'les lecteurs peuvent compliquer ou simplifier à leur gré'.[116] Pinkernell has decided to complicate the image, but without a factual basis on which to do so. He provides no textual evidence whatsoever to support his reading of the text.

Both Yvan LePage and Christine Martineau-Génieys have tracked the references to Thibault d'Aussigny throughout the *Testament* and they argue that the homosexual insinuations are not confined to this one stanza. In stanza LXXIII, Villon refers to

---

[112] Dufournet, 1984, p. 192.
[113] Jean Rychner and Albert Henry, *Le Testament Villon,* 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1974).
[114] Rychner and Henry, pp. 15-16.
[115] Pinkernell, p. 119.
[116] Dufournet, 1984, p. 193.

'Tacque Thibault'. We know from Champion's research that Tacque Thibault was the 'mignon' of the Duke of Berry and was hated by the people.[117] We can loosely translate 'mignon' as 'favourite', but the definition given by the *Dictionnaire du moyen français* is explicit: 'Appliqué aux jeunes gens de l'entourage de Charles VII et en partic. aux favoris efféminés d'Henri II: *les mignons avoient des familiaritez avec leur mestre que je ne puis ni veux exprimer*',[118] it finishes, citing the work of Agrippa d'Aubigné. The hint at homosexuality is clear and the link between the two names reinforces Villon's hatred of the bishop and strengthens the allusions to his sexuality.

In stanza CLI, Martineau-Génieys sees another reference to Thibault d'Aussigny, evoked through 'la grisle de Meun' in line 1633. Villon asks Marïon l'Idolle and Jehanne de Bretaigne, two known prostitutes, to set up a brothel, where the pupil will teach the master. We are told that the prostitute's trade is popular everywhere, except in this prison. The suggestion is that the trade cannot prosper when Thibault is in charge. Since he was a religious man, this would be reasonable, but Martineau-Génieys sees this as a further example of Thibault's homosexuality and adds that the reference to 'l'ouvraige' in line 1635 could be a reference to 'viol sodomique'.[119] This word undoubtedly does have erotic connotations, especially in the context of the *Testament*, where it appears as a proverb in line 616 – 'six ouvriers font plus que trois'. However, its link to anal rape is based purely on a supposition. There is no linguistic link between 'ouvraige' and homosexual activity. It depends on whether the critic is using a heterosexual or homosexual reading of the text. In this case, I feel that there is a general aura of homosexuality surrounding Thibault d'Aussigny, adding credence to the interpretation, but the reading of 'ouvraige' is unnecessary.

[117] See Champion, II, 114.
[118] A. J. Greimas, *Dictionnaire du moyen français: la Renaissance* (Paris: Larousse, 1992), p. 416.
[119] Martineau-Génieys, p. 241.

Even if we accept that these subtle comments are references to Thibault d'Aussigny being gay, are they actually true? In the Middle Ages, anticlerical satire made much of sodomy. It was a common, easy and very serious allegation, since anyone found guilty of the crime would face being burned at the stake. Villon is undermining the authority of the bishop but doing it in an understated and humorous way. Making an outright allegation of homosexuality against such a powerful figure would be a dangerous step to take, so he only hints at it. Furthermore, he anticipates any recriminations as early as the third stanza, using the rhetorical technique of *anteoccupatio*, when he states that 'en riens de luy je ne mesdiz' (20). Tony Hunt correctly states that there is an ironic implication here – 'what I say about him is *true*'.[120] Villon's other allegations are similarly veiled. In theory, he is speaking with impunity from beyond the grave, since in terms of the will, he has "died", but obviously, in real life, he could face legal recriminations as a result of untrue comments.

Having examined the references to Thibault d'Aussigny, we can now go on to look in a linear fashion through the *Testament* to see other legatees or references that have raised critical eyebrows and led to suggestions of a possible sexual meaning. The last stanza of the *Double ballade* is one of these:

> Mais que ce jeune bachelier
> Laissast ces jeunes bachelectes ?
> Non, et le deust on (tout) vif bruler

[120] Tony Hunt, *Villon's Last Will: Language and Authority in the 'Testament'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 40.

Comme ung chevaucheur… d'escrinnectes ! (665-668)

This is an example of where the variations in manuscript readings become interesting. Manuscript C[121] gives 'escrinnectes', whereas witness I,[122] the first printed edition, provides us with 'escouvettes'. The latter would refer to those who ride broomsticks, i.e. sorcerers and witches. This would tie in with the idea of being burned alive, as witches were burned as heretics, just as happened to Joan of Arc. However, Martineau-Génieys points out that homosexuals were also burnt at the stake. Furthermore, the phallic connotation of the broomstick could be considered as further evidence. Superficially, this would seem to be a compelling reading of the stanza, but there is indeed another possibility. The testator is lamenting the persecutions of those who love, emphasising the 'amant martyr' theme of the *Testament*. He mentions famous historical figures such as Samson and Narcissus, and every one of these is heterosexual. He even refers to his own putative love affair with Katherine de Vausselles. If we then take 'escrinnectes', we can see that it is a feminisation of 'escrinet', or a jewellery box. 'Chevaucheur', coming from the verb 'chevaucher', has erotic meanings, as seen in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* and the *Facecies de Poge*.[123] Therefore, it can be suggested that rather than the testator being a rider of broomsticks, he is a rider of women. This is an entirely reasonable interpretation based on the supposed sexual prowess of the testator that we see elsewhere, such as in the *ballade de conclusion*. The fire, of course, could be the flames of Love, as opposed to a funeral pyre.

---

[121] BnF, fr. 20041. Facsimile: A. Jeanroy and E. Droz, *Deux manuscrits de François Villon (Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 1661 et 20041)*, (Paris: Droz, 1932).
[122] *Le grant Testament et le petit. Son codicille. Le jargon et ses ballades*, imprimé par Pierre Levet, Paris, 1489. Facsimile: '*Le grant Testament et le petit. Son codicille. Le jargon et ses ballades*, avec une notice de Pierre Champion (Paris: Editions des Quatre-Chemins, 1924).
[123] See *CNn*, p. 298, line 165 and Tardif, p. 193. Further references can also be found in the *Dictionnaire érotique*, p. 130 and *Dlmf*, p. 162.

From the testator himself, we can move to one of the most interesting legatees, Ythier Merchant,[124] who appears in both the *Lais* and the *Testament*. Champion has identified Merchant as belonging to a family of magistrates, and thus as being a reasonably powerful figure.[125] He was also a contemporary of Villon. Let us look briefly at his bequest in the *Lais*. He receives a sword – 'mon branc d'acier tranchant' (83). At first sight, it seems a simple inheritance, but, as Jane Taylor points out, it is a 'gift with multiple meanings, vituperative, obscene and scatological'.[126] It is necessary to examine each meaning individually in order to understand the full semantic richness of the bequest. Firstly, swords have a long history of being phallic symbols in literature and this is incontrovertibly a possible interpretation here. Is Villon mocking Merchant's lack of virility? By the testator's leaving his own penis to Merchant, he implies that Merchant's own member is useless. Secondly, we see an obscene meaning, put forward by David Mus. In line 85, the testator states that the sword has been left in hock, until a bar tab can be paid. However, Mus reads 'en gaige' as 'en cage', or 'pris dans le sexe d'une femme'.[127] This would certainly be an obscene interpretation. Another possible fescennine meaning would be that the testator is providing his penis for 'la satisfaction de leurs besoins sexuels'.[128]

The third possibility is that of a scatological pun. Rather than reading the line 'branc d'acier', it is suggested that it may actually be 'bran à chier'.[129] 'Bran' had the meaning of excrement, suggesting that in Villon's mind, this is the only thing that

[124] Note that this name is also spelt 'Marchant', but I follow Mühlethaler's spelling.
[125] See Champion, II, 297-8.
[126] Jane H. M. Taylor, *The Poetry of François Villon: Text and Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 42.
[127] Mus, p. 409.
[128] Martineau-Génieys, p. 236.
[129] See Mus, p. 433.

Merchant is worth. Whatever the meaning of this bequest, it would seem likely that Villon has a dislike of Merchant and therefore, his appearance in the *Testament* in stanzas XCIV and XCIX comes as no surprise to the reader.

Stanza XCIV may explain Villon's objections to Merchant. He bequeaths him a lay to celebrate his former love, which has to be made into a song and played on the lute. As regards this love, Villon uses the rhetorical technique of preterition when stating 'desquelles le nom je ne diz/Car il me hairoit a tous jours' (976-77). Through preterition, the testator is in fact drawing attention to that which he says he is not going to discuss. Again, the stanza proposes a variety of possibilities. By suggesting that Merchant compose a song, Villon can be seen as attacking Merchant's musical ability or his powers of versification. Villon, as a skilled and imaginative poet, clearly knows how to manipulate language. However, it has also been suggested that Merchant was in fact Villon's rival in love. There is only the textual evidence for this, as no documented account of Villon's life exists to reinforce it. In refusing to speak the name of Merchant's lover, there is clearly some malice involved, especially when the lay is taken into consideration. It begins 'mort, j'appelle de ta rigueur' (978) and points out that every woman dies eventually. If Merchant has succeeded in winning Villon's lover away from him, then it is a hollow victory, since at some point she will die.

However, there is another interpretation of the Merchant-Villon relationship. Gert Pinkernell has suggested that they were actually lovers[130] and this has been developed by Martineau-Génieys. Agreeing with Mus's suggestion that the 'De profundiz' of

[130] Gert Pinkernell, 'Villon und Ythier Marchant: Zum Kommentar von *Lais* 81-88 und *Testament* 970-989', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 91 (1975), 95-107.

stanza XCIV is a metaphor referring to the anus, she takes the lute on which the melody is to be played as a phallic symbol. However, her study then starts to venture into the world of improbability. Martineau-Génieys appears to subscribe to the theory of anagrams contained within Villon's work. Within the name of Ythier Merchant, she finds Katherine, linking to Katherine de Vausselles, a woman often claimed to be one of Villon's lovers. She then looks at the words 'je ne diz' in line 976, only to discover the name Denise.

Denise has been the subject of various hypotheses by Villon commentators, but her only appearance is in line 1234 of the *Testament*, where the testator says that Denise claimed that he cursed her. Mühlethaler argues that 'il s'agit d'un type plutôt que d'un individu: rien ne permet de conclure à une aventure personnelle de Villon'.[131] Claude Thiry suggests that it could refer to Charles Dyonis, an adversary of Cotart, but is unclear as to why Villon would deform the name in this way.[132] Martineau-Génieys proposes the answer – Charles Dyonis replaced Villon in the affections of Ythier Merchant and Villon cursed him for this.[133] The major part of Martineau-Génieys' hypothesis on this subject is based on the decrypting of supposed anagrams within the work. However, the use of these anagrams has fallen into decline and they are now viewed as irrelevant. John Fox, when referring to the original theory proposed by Tristan Tzara, states that 'a very thorough computer-based investigation of these claims has demonstrated that they do not withstand analysis [...] what anagrams may appear to be present by this method in the poetry of Villon and his contemporaries are there by chance alone'.[134] Martineau-Génieys' over-reliance on this theory in an

[131] Mühlethaler, p. 445.
[132] François Villon, *Poésies complètes*, ed. by Claude Thiry (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1991), p. 362.
[133] Martineau-Génieys, p. 248.
[134] Fox, 1984, p. 102.

attempt to prove Villon's homosexuality sadly undermines the rest of her interesting argument and I follow Fox in discounting any use of anagrams for discovering previously hidden meanings in the text.

There is another, and final, reference to Merchant in stanza 99:

> Item, donne a mon advocat,
> Maistre Guillaume Charüau...
> Quoy ? que Marchant ot pour estat,
> Mon branc ; je me taiz du fourreau... (1022-1025)

The testator is again referring to his 'branc'. If we continue to read this as a phallic symbol, the reference to Merchant's 'estat' again suggests impotency in some form. The principal interest here is that the testator says nothing of the 'fourreau' – or the sheath in which the sword would be contained. This is another example of preterition, implying that the testator is indeed going to discuss the sheath. In a "straight", as opposed to "gay" figurative reading, the 'fourreau' would be seen as a reference to the vagina. Indeed, Evelyn Vitz sees 'no symbolic relevance'[135] in reading 'fourreau' as 'anus' or 'branc' as 'excrement'. This is somewhat odd, as although Vitz is receptive to various symbolic interpretations and contaminations, her mind does not appear to be open to any suggestions of homosexuality in this stanza.

Nevertheless, there are yet more erotic allusions in this stanza, as shown by its concluding lines:

---

[135] Vitz, p. 30.

Il aura avec cë reau

En change, affin que sa bourse enffle,

Prins sur la chaussee et carreau

De la grant closture du Temple (1026-29)

'Bourse' can be translated as 'purse' and a 'reau' was a gold coin, making a straightforward reading. However, there are alternative meanings. From lines 580 and 914, we have seen the erotic connotation of 'bourse' – scrotum. Of course, this eroticism is not unique to Villon, since it has been used in other medieval texts, such as the *fabliaux*. We see this in *Trubert* and *Les Quatre Sohais Saint Martin* where there is a word-play on 'borse'.[136] A 'reau' can also be a round hole in slang, linking to the 'De profundiz' of stanza 94. Therefore, we have the image of a man being bequeathed a penis, along with a round hole that he has picked up from the street and the swelling of his scrotum. The suggestion is obvious and needs no further elaboration. However, Vitz asks if the '*rëaux* [are] specifically testicles or simply sexual potency in general?'.[137] She again seems to miss the possible homosexual interpretation of the stanza.

After this excursus in order to follow Ythier Merchant through the *Testament*, let us look at Jehan Cornu, who appears in stanza XCV. Immediately, his name arouses suspicion, since it implies a cuckold, horns being the traditional symbol of the cuckolded male. Cornu is given a garden that the testator has leased from Pierre Bobignon, but only if Cornu will 'reffaire/ l'uys et redrecier le pignon' (996-997). For

[136] See Gaunt, p. 250 and p. 263.
[137] Vitz, p. 30.

Martineau-Génieys, Cornu is a 'homosexuel notoire'.[138] There is an immediate link between Ythier Merchant and Cornu, as we see from the *Lais*, where they are mentioned together in stanza XI, which seems to set alarm bells ringing straightaway. This passage remains one of the most obscure of the *Testament*, since there is no evidence to explain it. It is unlikely that Villon ever did live somewhere that Bobignon had leased him, particularly given the gulf in their social class – Bobignon was the public prosecutor at the Châtelet and Villon was a criminal. It is, in fact, much more likely that he was in the place illegally and is now letting everyone know about it. Given that Villon is playing on the name of Cornu, it is possible that he is also mocking Bobignon in the same way, given that the name evokes 'beau bignon', or 'belle bosse', which, according to Luca Pierdominici, is 'un des attributs des cocus'.[139]

A further pointer that this is an important stanza is the density of rhetorical techniques employed by Villon. *Annominatio* is used heavily, emphasising 'faire' in four lines of the verse. Furthermore, the line 'A mon grant besoing et affaire' is emphasised by the use of end-stopping, showing that yet again, Villon employs antiphrasis. It is clear, therefore, that Cornu has never helped Villon out – in fact, he may well have acted against him. However, the plot is continuing to thicken.

In the next stanza, the testator claims that because of the lack of the door, he managed to lose a hoe handle and a paving stone, but the last four lines are of most interest to us:

[138] Martineau-Génieys, p. 243.
[139] Pierdominici, p. 173.

L'ostel est seur, mais qu'on le cloue.

Pour enseigne y mis ung havet,

(Et) qui [que] l'ait prins, point ne m'en loue

Sanglante nuyt et bas chevet ! (1002-1005)

An integral part of this study is metaphor theory. The third chapter of this thesis is devoted to the study of metaphor theory and representations of the female body, but it is necessary here to flag up an excellent example of how the body could be perceived as a building. The employment of the conceptual metaphor THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING is common and line 1002 is a case in point. We have already seen the reference to the 'uys' in the previous lines, and this is paralleled in other fifteenth-century texts, including the *Sermon joyeux d'un depucelleur de nourrices.*[140] The *Sermon de Billouart*[141] also has similarities, which I shall expand upon in the third chapter.

Therefore, since the door is open, people have managed to gain entrance. The testator then claims that he put up a hook as 'enseigne', or house sign. The hook was often used by burglars to gain entrance, further evidence that the testator had broken in, but it also has a phallic connotation. Would it be going too far to suggest that the testator is referring to a sexual escapade? Martineau-Génieys thinks not, since she also suggests that the phrase 'redrecier le pignon' is a phallic symbol,[142] implying that Villon's difficult night there was spent with Jehan Cornu.

---

[140] *Sermon joyeux d'un depucelleur de nourrices* in *Recueil de poésies françoises des XVe et XVIe siècles*, ed. by A. de Montaiglon, 13 vols (Paris: Jannet, 1855-78), vi (1857), 199-208 (p. 208).
[141] *Recueil de sermons joyeux,* pp.105-32.
[142] Martineau-Génieys, p. 250.

David Mus reads this passage as a heterosexual escapade, but his interpretation may make some readers wince. In a lengthy two-page study of the two stanzas in question, he suggests that Villon was not sleeping with a man, but with a woman. However, rather than reading line 998 as the lack of the door, he suggests that it was the fault of the door and that Villon 'y a perdu son membre'.[143] It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Villon would have spent an awful night there![144] We can clearly see the tenuous nature of Mus's argumentation. Of course, it is crucial to remember that the *Testament* is fiction and nothing in it is necessarily true. If it were being told to an audience in one of the Parisian taverns, they would undoubtedly be looking for the "humour factor". Michael Freeman proposes the idea that 'the *Lais* perhaps started life as an entertainment in some of the "trous" (to use their word) just across the way from Notre-Dame'. He then adds, 'it is not difficult to imagine Villon playing a variety of roles, adopting a variety of disguises, imitating the voice and gestures of an old hag like the Belle Heaulmiere or impersonating a drunk like Jehan Cotart'.[145] What could be more humorous and designed to make people cringe than a story about the medical phenomenon of *penis captivus*? I find both Martineau-Génieys and Mus's interpretations to be almost desperate attempts to push the erotic interpretations as far as possible. There is nothing new in Villon's use of metaphors for the body, and certainly, a bawdy joke using popular imagery is perfectly acceptable, but the idea of *penis captivus* and homosexuality here seems to smack of sensationalism.

The legatee Jean Raguier is the next to be studied in this analysis. He is bequeathed a 'tallemouze/pour bouter et fourrer sa muse' (1073-4). A 'tallemouze', as we see in

[143] Mus, p. 427.
[144] It should be noted that I disagree with John Fox's suggestion (p. 86) that Villon is wishing Cornu a bad time there. It is undoubtedly the testator describing his own experience.
[145] Freeman, p. 12.

Jehan de Saintré,[146] is a type of cake – but it is one that Raguier is meant to receive every day. Raguier was one of the twelve sergeants of the Provost of Paris, meaning that he had an association with the law. Of course, this would place him in opposition to Villon, a criminal. Therefore, it would not be surprising to see a hidden message here, as we did with the legacy regarding Pierre Bobignon, another authority figure. André Burger, in his *Lexique de la langue de Villon*[147] suggests that the 'tallemouze' is a 'soufflet', or blow to the face. Most other editors and critics agree with this, though Rychner and Henry do not. They gloss it as a 'tarte au fromage et aux oeufs', pointing out that 'le sens 'soufflet' (Burger, p. 107), n'est, sauf erreur, pas attesté'.[148] They also point out that the definition of 'talle' in the *Dictionnaire historique des argots français*,[149] 'coup saignant', cites Villon. Nevertheless, the interpretation of 'tallemouze' as a blow seems compelling. If Villon had had some argument with Raguier, he would undoubtedly have enjoyed giving him a slap. However, Martineau-Génieys sees a more malevolent accusation here.[150] 'Muse', of course, means 'museau' and with this, she proposes that Raguier's snout is covered with the white filling of the cake, evoking fellatio. It would seem that this interpretation is stretching the bounds of credulity to their breaking point. It is unnecessary to look for a sexual allusion in this stanza, as the interpretation of Raguier receiving a daily blow would appear perfectly reasonable, given Villon's aversion to authority. If we are going to propose that fellatio is going on here, we might as well propose that Villon was a sadist who liked to inflict blows; that Raguier was a masochist who liked to receive them and that they engaged in sadomasochistic practices together. There is no evidence, textual or otherwise, to support any such assertion.

---

[146] See Mühlethaler, p. 244.
[147] André Burger, *Lexique de la langue de Villon* (Geneva: Droz, 1957), p. 107.
[148] Rychner and Henry, p. 157.
[149] Gaston Esnault, *Dictionnaire historique des argots français* (Paris: Larousse, 1965).
[150] See Martineau-Génieys, p. 237.

Stanza CVII is a bequest to the Unze Vingt Sergens and begins with another example of antiphrasis, when the testator states that 'leur fait est honneste' (1087). In his mind, it is anything but honest; as yet again, we see an example of Villon versus authority, since the Unze Vingt Sergens made up part of the Paris police force. He singles two of the guards out by name – Denis Richier and Jehan Valecte, a feminisation of Valet. It is possible to see an erotic connotation, as does Mühlethaler,[151] as 'vallette' would mean 'petite vallée', perhaps referring to the contours of the female body. It has also been suggested that there is a similar joke here with the name of Katherine de Vausselles.[152] Villon gives them a strip of cloth to hang on their hats. However, 'pour pendre' begins line 1091, with the enjambment emphasising it. Furthermore, in some editions,[153] there is even a hyphen added to make the point all the more apparent. The testator has given them a strip of cloth so that they can hang – there is clearly no love lost here. Martineau-Génieys accepts this as the most common interpretation, but adds that it is also perhaps to 'égayer les couvre-chefs de la police de Paris, trop stricts dans le cas de nos deux sergents'.[154] Again, it seems an unnecessarily sensationalist approach to the text, looking very hard to find new interpretations that do not really exist. It would seem entirely counter-intuitive for the critic to take such a different and slightly unconventional approach to the passage and I cannot agree with her reading.

This brings us to line 1118 and the stanza relating to the 'Orfevre de boys', one of the most explicit sexual stanzas in the entirety of the *Testament* and *Lais*. This was the

---

[151] Mühlethaler, p. 465.
[152] See Jean Dufournet, *Recherches sur le 'Testament' de François Villon*, 2 vols, 2nd rev. ed. (Paris: Sedes, 1973), I, 86-89.
[153] See François Villon, *Complete Poems*, ed. by Barbara N. Sargent-Baur (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 128.
[154] Martineau-Génieys, p. 239.

nickname of Jean Mahé, a torturer.[155] He receives one hundred cloves of Arab ginger and it is worth quoting the final four lines of the stanza in full, in order to get the best effect:

> ... pour joindre cuz et couëctes
> Et couldre jambons et andoulles,
> Tant que le let en monte aux tectes
> Et le sang en devalle aux coulles (1122-1125)

Even someone with rudimentary knowledge of metaphoricity would be hard pressed not to understand the idea of joining 'tails and arses, hams and sausages', as John Fox puts it.[156] The 'andoulle' is a common metaphor for the penis, as shown by the *Sermon joyeux de saint Jambon et de sainte Andouille.*[157] The potency of the Arab ginger as an aphrodisiac is clear, but Mühlethaler notes that due to the reference to 'sang' in line 1125 and also 'clouz' in 1119, 'l'acte sexuel est perçu, à travers le glissement vers l'obscénité, comme un acte de violence'.[158] I do not follow Mühlethaler here, as the blood moving to the testicles is surely a description of a physiological reaction. For the penis to become erect, it is necessary for blood to rush to it. It could be also be suggested that, like Ythier Merchant being in need of a new penis due to his impotence, Mahé requires help to boost his sexual performance – the 'gingembre sarrazinoys' is the fifteenth-century version of Viagra, if you will, especially as he is called 'de boys', which had the meaning of 'penis' in the fifteenth century. For example, we can find the phrase, 'les vignes n'eurent si beau boys Long

[155] See Champion, II, 338-39.
[156] Fox, p. 102.
[157] See *Quatre Sermons joyeux,* pp. 47-56.
[158] Mühlethaler, p. 246.

temps y a'.[159] Martineau-Génieys goes a step further yet again. She sees the Orfevre de boys as a 'cuir' who is also a sadist or sadomasochist.[160] She suggests that the testator is describing a scene of orgasm, but 'rien ne permet de décider s'il s'agit de [la jouissance] du supplicié ou de son bourreau: les deux sans doute'.[161] Once more, this is a stretch of the imagination too far, as this is an explicit, open passage. It is entirely possible that Mahé may have had sadistic or sadomasochistic tendencies, since he worked as a torturer and one could imagine that to be a torturer, these tendencies may even be a requisite. It could be suggested that Villon is using this information to discredit the torturer in the eyes of the Parisian public. Nevertheless, this tendency to see something hidden behind many of the bequests seems unnecessary.

Stanza CXXII brings us to 'la petite Macee'. A first reading of the stanza would suggest a possible link to a prostitute, since the testator describes her as 'une mauvaise ordure' in line 1213. However, this would appear to be another example of Villon's feminisation of the names of his legatees. Here, he has corrupted the name of Macé d'Orléans, the bailiff of Berry.[162] Jean Dufournet notes that 'Macé' can be a nickname referring to a cuckolded husband, quoting from an example used by Guillaume Coquillart, a close contemporary of Villon.[163] However, he then proposes an even more interesting hypothesis – that of sodomy, due to the fact that in certain texts, sodomy is described as 'le ord et villain pechié de Sodome' and 'le maudict et

[159] Emile Mabille, *Choix de farces, sotties et moralités des 15^e^ et 16^e^ siècles* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970). The reference is to story XI, line 94. Further examples can be found in the *Dictionnaire érotique*, p. 75.
[160] Martineau-Génieys, pp. 239-40.
[161] Martineau-Génieys, p. 240.
[162] See Champion, I, 258-9.
[163] Dufournet, 1980, p. 133.

ord peschié de sodomie'.[164] Pierdominici agrees regarding the 'moeurs spéciales', but goes further, pointing out the possibility of 'problèmes de nature vénérienne'.[165] With Villon's reference to the 'culz rongneux' in line 1208, this is a plausible reading. Due to the relative obscurity of this stanza, it is hard to propose a definitive solution, but it would seem that all the evidence points to the sexual behaviour of Macé. Why, though, did he receive Villon's belt? Did he attempt to rob him or was this part of a sadomasochistic sex act?

In stanza CXXIV, the testator refers to the 'arcesvesque de Bourges'. This stanza has elicited very little critical commentary, but David Mus seems to have found a homosexual reference in it, claiming that the proverbial locution 'aller à Bourges' meant 'se faire pédéraste'.[166] However, upon referring the notes adduced to back up the assertion, it appears baseless, since Mus can cite no source. He claims that 'les noms de ville, chez Villon, ont toujours un deuxième sens de ce genre'.[167] This is a dangerous assumption, as it appears that Mus has this idea in his mind and is attempting to mould every town name to fit into this pattern. However, Bourges does appear again in the *Testament*, this time in the last line of stanza CXL. This is a stanza in which the testator leaves nothing to Jehan Pedrier and his brother, Françoys. As we have seen before, Villon is particularly fond of the use of antiphrasis, so it should be of no surprise when we read line 1408 – 'S'y m'ont voulu toujours aidier'. This suggests that the brothers Perdrier have done nothing of the sort. The testator tells us that at Bourges, they recommended that he try 'langues cuisans, flambans et rouges'. He then consults Guillaume Tirel's cookbook and comes up with an impressive and

[164] Dufournet, 1980, pp. 134-135.
[165] Pierdominici, p. 201.
[166] Mus, p. 109.
[167] Mus, p. 134.

virulent recipe, now known as the *ballade des langues ennuyeuses*. It is a vicious, powerful and emotive ballade, but one that remains rather obscure. The refrain asks that the 'langues' be fried. Yet again, Jean Dufournet has delved deeply into the background of the Perdriers, and he proposes a lengthy explanation.[168] His final suggestion links back to the first reference to Bourges, when he cites an example of 'Bougres' referring to sodomites. This is an example of metathesis, where sounds in the pronunciation of the word have been switched. It has therefore been suggested that, 'les frères Perdrier, ces « langues envieuses », auraient dangereusement compromis Villon en révélant son appétence homosexuelle'.[169] We also have the suggestion that these flaming tongues would in fact be men being burnt at the stake, for the sin of sodomy. These make for highly interesting and even theatrical interpretations of the stanzas, but seemingly with very little textual evidence to support them. To read the stanza and ballade in this way certainly makes for an exciting image, but a misrepresentation of the text could well be involved here. I find it likely that the Perdriers had in some way upset Villon, hence his attack on them, but it is doubtful that he engaged in homosexual practices with them.

The next legatee to be examined is Jacques Cardon, the beneficiary of stanza CLXVI. Cardon is a legatee who, like Ythier Merchant, also appeared in the *Lais* (stanza XVI). He is left a rondeau, which the testator says should be sung to the tune of *Marïonnecte* or *Ouvrez vostre huys, Guillemecte*. The latter tune is clearly a sexual reference. The conceptual metaphor THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING has already appeared in the *Testament*, as shown by line 1002. Here, the idea of the door being opened suggests that the woman is going to be penetrated by the man. If we

[168] See Dufournet, 1973, pp. 461-473.
[169] LePage, p. 221.

return to the stanza of the *Lais*, Cardon is showered with gifts, receiving a total of five. The first is that of 'le glan d'une saulsoye'. Jelle Koopmans points out that this is a non-existent gift, since willows do not produce acorns.[170] However, he then points out that the 'saulsoye' has a long literary tradition, where it is a *locus amoenus*, or translated from the Latin, a 'pleasant place'. In literature, it is usually an idyllic setting, which is the site of a romantic or sexual encounter. The *locus amoenus* immediately associates the person concerned with sexual relations, reinforcing the erotic link with *Ouvrez vostre huys, Guillemecte*. When we take into account that Cardon is also bequeathed a goose, a capon and wine, the testator creates the idea of a man with a hearty appetite, as much for women as food. Of course, the fact that a capon is a male chicken could lead a particularly suspicious reader to see a possible homosexual reading here, but Koopmans' excellent and detailed study would rule this out.

With the stanza relating to Pierre Lomer, CLXVII, the testator initiates a sequence of legatees, all of whom commentators have alleged to be homosexual. Lomer was a priest given the job of removing prostitutes from the Cité. He receives the gift of being loved and the ability to have sexual intercourse one hundred times a night. As a priest, Lomer would be expected to be celibate, so there is the accusation that Lomer has broken his vows and rather than getting rid of the prostitutes, he is actually using them. However, the fact that he is bequeathed the ability to perform sexually suggests that in fact, he was impotent or lacking in virility, just as the interpretation of Ythier Merchant being left a penis mocks his virility. However, whilst bequeathing him the gift of being loved, the testator adds:

[170] Jelle Koopmans, 'Villon et Jacques Cardon', *French Studies*, 54/3 (2000), 277-86.

Fille en chief ou femme coeffee,

Ja n'en ayt la teste eschauffee ! (1799 – 1800)

By this, the testator refers to women wearing their heads bare or with a coif, i.e. all types of women, both married and unmarried. However, since he does not have his 'teste eschaufee' by this, could it be, as Dufournet suggests,[171] that the testator is pointing out that Lomer is homosexual? If the testator isn't bothered by Lomer's ability to have sex a hundred times a night with various women, it is because women are of no interest to Lomer – he actually wants to have sex with men. Given that Lomer was a member of the clergy and Villon's dislike for authority figures, especially those within religion, such as Thibault d'Aussigny, it is a reasonable suggestion.

The following stanza brings us to the bequests to the 'amans enfermes'. The testator refers to Alain Chartier, a fifteenth-century poet famous for his work, *la Belle dame sans mercy*.[172] This is a courtly work, which talks about the 'amoureux malades' – i.e., those that suffer for love. This idea is a common topos in medieval literature in general, and of course, in particular in the *Testament*. The testator dies as a martyr to love, but mocking it all the time, as will be shown in the *ballade de conclusion*. Here, the testator is contemptuous of the lovers. He refers to the 'benoistier' and 'guepillon', which are, according to Michael Freeman, 'common sexual metaphors for, respectively, the female and male sexual organs'.[173] He then concludes the stanza

[171] See Dufournet, 1973, pp. 498-501.
[172] Various editions are available. For example, *The Poetical Works of Alain Chartier*, ed. by J. C. Laidlaw (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).
[173] Freeman, p. 91.

by asking them to say a psalter for Villon's soul. Freeman points out that there is a similarity between 'psaultier' and 'saulter', which has a sexual connotation. This has appeared before in line 924 – 'faictes ung sault', where it is associated with Michault, who is known as the 'bon fouterre'. The meaning of his nickname is evident. Yvan LePage, seeking to reinforce his homosexual reading of the *Testament*, states 'leur prétendue chasteté est synonyme de perversité plutôt que d'impuissance',[174] but fails to give any further evidence for his statement. I see no need to look for a homosexual interpretation here, since Villon's mocking of courtly love is a compelling suggestion, particularly given his ridicule of courtly love poetry elsewhere in the *Testament*. For example, in the *ballade de conclusion*, which I will examine later in this chapter, he swaps between the courtly register of 'car en amours mourut martyr' (line 2001) and the base register of 'ce jura il sur son coullon' (line 2002). Furthermore, the *ballade de la Grosse Margot* also mocks courtly attitudes. Cristina Azuela notes that the use of 'périphrases euphémiques' may be in order to 'démasquer les tabous verbaux imposés par la tradition courtoise'.[175] This is an interesting and very plausible hypothesis.

Stanza CLXIX relates to Jacques James, the owner of a bathhouse in the 'rue aux Truies'. This, however, is interpreted to be a pun. In lines 1814-15, the testator gives James the right to get engaged, but not to marry. 'Truie' is a slang term for prostitute, hence suggesting that James is actually a pimp. He can sleep with the women as much as he wants, but he will never marry them, since they earn money for him. However, there is a further twist in this stanza. Since people have a tendency to believe proverbs and accept them as axioms, Villon employs proverbial discourse throughout the

[174] LePage, p. 77.
[175] Cristina Azuela, 'Les métaphores érotiques des *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*: sexe et écriture', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 29 (2003), 35-51 (p. 36).

Testament, as a way of persuading his audience. Here, we see it employed in the last two lines:

> Et qui(l) fust aux truyes, je tiens
> Qu'il doit de droit estre aux pourceaux. (1818-1819)

This relates to the proverb 'Si truie forfait, les pourceaux le comparent'. However, Paul Verhuyck has shown that there may well be another interpretation of the link between 'truyes' and 'pourceaux'. In his article, he quotes a passage from the *Pronostication nouvelle de Tubal Holoferne*, which gives a sexual interpretation to the relationship between sows and swine – 'les truyes aiment les pourceaux'.[176] Nevertheless, there is further evidence within the *Testament* that no commentator has yet utilised. The reference to pigs allows us to widen the search throughout the *Testament* and we can refer back to the 'Orfevre de boys', who received an aphrodisiac in order to join hams and sausages. Hams and sausages, of course, are made from pork. Following Martineau-Génieys' sexual interpretation of that stanza, it is further evidence of James' homosexuality.

The next stanza has been examined in depth by Verhuyck in the same article, and he is the only commentator to have proposed a homosexual explanation of the 'camus seneschal'. Usual interpretations centre upon the phrase 'ferrer oyes', a proverb meaning to look after useless things. However, Verhuyck points out that 'ferrer' has

[176] Paul Verhuyck, 'De la sottie à Villon: Comment ferrer une oie' in *Villon at Oxford: The Drama of the Text,* ed. by Michael Freeman and Jane H. M. Taylor (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 342-79 (p. 373).

erotic connotations, as we see in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*.[177] For example, in *nouvelle* LXVIII we have the passage:

> Et elle, comme courtoise et telle qu'estoit, ne refusa pas le service qu'on luy presentoit, mais debonnairement se laissa ferrer, et maintint ceste vie assez et longuement.[178]

Or in *nouvelle* II, we see:

> Finablement, trop plus pour a pere et a mere obeir que pour crainte de sa mort vaincue, la povre fille se laissa ferrer.[179]

With this, and a detailed study of passages from the *Sottie des Sots qui corrigent le Magnificat, à cinq personages*, he concludes that the 'camus seneschal' was also homosexual. We know from antiphrasis in this stanza that he failed to pay Villon his debts. Were they monetary or sexual debts?

From this, continuing the long line of questionable sexuality, we reach the gift to the Chevallier du Guet. He receives 'deux beaux petiz paiges'. If we take the gift literally, then this legatee is obviously involved in 'amour noir'. Despite the best efforts of researchers such as Champion, the identity of the two pages, known only as Philebert and Marcquet, remains unknown. It could be, therefore, that they are not real names, but actually puns. Mühlethaler points out the semantic similarity between 'Marcquet' and 'maquette', 'objet dont certains texts n'ont pas manqué d'exploiter les

[177] Verhuyck, p. 357.
[178] *CNn*, p. 418.
[179] *CNn*, p. 33.

connotations phalliques',[180] referencing the *Parnasse satyrique*. No other commentator has spotted this connection, but it is entirely plausible. Since the Chevallier du Guet was an important police officer, it is almost certain that the testator's bequest is malevolent. However, unless Philebert and Marcquet are one day identified, this stanza is likely to forever remain mysterious.

Stanza CLXXII is the last stanza in this strange series of interpretations and is also where the testator's bequests end. It is about Jean Chapelain, a member of the guard at the Châtelet, but this time, the attack is not related to his profession, but to his name, since he inherits the testator's 'chappelle a simple tonsure'. In the final two lines of the *huitain*, the testator tells us:

> De conffesser, ce dit, n'a cure
> Synon chamberieres et dames. (1842-3)

The importance of these two lines lies in the word 'conffesser'. Villon would appear to be entering into the medieval tradition of puns on the word 'con'. There is a *fabliau* called *Du chevalier qui fist parler les cons*,[181] but the most common joke was to change 'confesser' into 'con fesser' and 'con fesseur'. Therefore, since Villon is saying that the only people who Chapelain wants to 'conffesser' are chambermaids and ladies, he must be heterosexual. Verhuyck, however, suggests that this is not the case, pointing out the words 'ce dit'. As we know, throughout the *Testament*, the reader is kept constantly aware that this is an ironical will and that the veracity of everything said in it should be called into question. Therefore, Verhuyck argues that

[180] Mühlethaler, p. 273.
[181] Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard, *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, 10 vols (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983-98), III (1986), 45-173.

by the use of 'ce dit', it could be interpreted, 'il prétend, c'est connu, qu'il est hétérosexuel, mais est-ce que c'est bien vrai ?'[182] Verhuyck states that he hopes to return and study this stanza further, but at the time of writing of this thesis, has unfortunately yet to do so.

The final allegation of homosexuality in the *Testament* is one that is not shared by all critics. David Mus proposed an interesting reading of the *Ballade de conclusion*, with special attention paid to the third stanza. He reads the 'mallement' of line 2014 as a pun on 'mâle-ment',[183] suggesting that Villon has an erection at the moment of his death. David Fein took up this suggestion and expanded upon it still further in his article,[184] suggesting that Villon is here a victim of a male rape.

The *ballade de conclusion* purports to show the death of Villon, the testator, enabling his will to come into force and allowing him to speak with impunity from beyond the grave. It portrays him as the 'povre Villon', a key theme of the *Testament* as a whole and describes how Villon has suffered for love. He has used this idea in the *Lais* also, saying 'je suys amant martir' in line 47. In the first stanza, the unknown narrator says 'ce jura il sur son coullon'. When people traditionally swear oaths, they do so on the Bible or at least an object with some solemnity. By swearing on his testicle, Villon is using *irrisio*, or mocking, the process of swearing an oath, and is attempting to provoke a humorous response in his audience, emphasised by the rhyme on 'coullon'. There is a further example of paronomasia here in that Villon is referring to the Latin

[182] Verhuyck, p. 374.
[183] See Mus, pp. 333-334.
[184] Fein, 1980.

maxim 'testis unus, testis nullus', 'one witness/testicle is no witness/testicle'.[185] Immediately, we can see that there is an element of sexuality in this ballade.

The second stanza discusses the ways in which Villon suffered for love. Claude Thiry suggests that Villon is here referring to his brief affair with Katherine de Vaucelles, which culminated with his being beaten and 'chassié'.[186] This can only be a hypothesis. Villon also employs a simile, which emphasises class difference – 'comme ung soullon'. It is generally assumed that Villon enjoyed clerical status, but that his punishment by Thibault d'Aussigny involved the loss of this. Therefore, through this comparison, Villon is suggesting that he has been mistreated by love and a lover, and it marks his disdain for this failed relationship, emphasised even more by juxtaposing 'Amours' with 'hayneusement' in line 2006. However, if we look back at the first line of this stanza, the narrator states that 'je croy bien que pas n'en ment'. It is already clear that this is a satirical will and its veracity is in doubt, so it is necessary to be cautious with each supposed statement of the unknown narrator, just as it was necessary to be wary of the testator's pronouncements. In line 2007, he refers to Roussillon. Thiry notes here that 'Roussillon' is a 'calembour érotique avec *roux sillon*',[187] and Hunt takes this even further, suggesting that the 'brosses' and 'brossillon' may refer to the female sexual organ,[188] and thus be synecdochic for his sexual conquests. This reminds us of Mus's assertion that 'les noms de ville, chez Villon, ont toujours un deuxième sens de ce genre',[189] i.e. an erotic connotation. Whilst it is difficult to believe that all of the town names have an erotic subtext, it is certainly a believable interpretation in some cases, such as this one. In a paper given

[185] Hunt, 1996, p. 68.
[186] Thiry, p. 252.
[187] Thiry, p. 252.
[188] Hunt, 1996, p. 69.
[189] Mus, p. 134.

at the conference 'Villon at Oxford', Hunt goes further. He suggests that this passage may well be 'an erotic adventure, "une ruée érotique", in which the refugee has every woman he can until he ends with scarcely a stitch on ("n'avoit q'un haillon")'.[190]

The third stanza undeniably shows an assault on Villon, as we are told, 'l'espoignoit d'Amours l'esguillon' in line 2015. This is a key topos of love poetry, as when someone falls in love, it is said that an arrow from Cupid's bow has struck them. One of the most famous examples of this is in the *Roman de la rose*, in which 'que par mi l'ueil m'a ou cuer mise'[191] – the man's heart is penetrated by the 'floiche' of the God of Love, which enters through his eye. However, this topos can be traced back much further, such as to the anonymous *Eneas* of the early twelfth century, and there are arguments that it dates from Arabic erotic literature.[192] Falling in love after having been struck by Cupid's arrow is usually portrayed as pleasurable, even though the idea of penetration is inherently aggressive, but Villon portrays it in a negative way, stating that this penetration was sharper than 'le ranguillon/d'un baudrier'. This is undoubtedly an unusual image.

Before considering the symbolism of the belt buckle's prong, it is necessary to consider an idea suggested by Leo Spitzer in 1939.[193] Based on an examination of *Ulysses,* Spitzer sees in the *ballade de conclusion* the physiological consequences of hanging – an erection. It can, therefore, be suggested that Villon has described his death on the gallows, because of a crime. Walter Blue agrees with this interpretation,

---

[190] Tony Hunt, 'Villon's Last Erection' in *Villon at Oxford: The Drama of the Text*, ed. by Michael Freeman and Jane H.M. Taylor (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 150-8 (p. 155).
[191] Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. by Félix Lecoy, 3 vols (Paris: Champion, 1965-70), I, 176. The reference is to line 1692.
[192] For a more detailed discussion, see Spearing, pp. 8-10.
[193] Leo Spitzer, 'Sur le v. 2015 du *Testament* de Villon', *Romania*, 65 (1939), 101-03.

stating that '[Villon's] words and images suggest and evoke the male's involuntary reaction to a death by hanging – erection and ejaculation'.[194] Rychner and Henry agree that there may be a joke in these lines, but state that 'l'allusion à la pendaison nous paraît inutile'.[195] Walter Blue goes on to state that 'Villon's muddlement ends in physical masturbation, an act of deliberately flaunted sterile sex'.[196] Looking again at the ballade, there is only one possibility of a reference to semen – the scraps of Villon's clothing ('cotillon') that have been scattered around, described in line 2010, making this image tenuous. Whilst the idea of an erection as a bawdy joke is acceptable, the idea of Villon's physical masturbation seems unlikely. However, given the other possible references to semen and sexual acts throughout the poem, Blue's statement cannot be dismissed out of hand, thought it is necessary to treat it with extreme caution.

Due to the proliferation of phallic imagery throughout the *Testament* as a whole, an erection here can be accepted, as Jane Taylor agrees.[197] It is much harder to see a homosexual rape. Fein asks, 'what could be more consistent with the theme of victimization than this brutal sexual assault?'[198] It appears more likely that whilst Villon is being victimized, his tormentor is not an unknown rapist, but the god of Love. Even now, with Villon dying as a poor and broken man, he is still suffering the effects of love. He has lost out to women on several occasions but cannot be left alone to die. However, Tony Hunt sees neither the involuntary erection nor a rape, simply Villon's 'defiant erotomania'.[199] I follow Hunt in seeing this final sexual gesture as a

[194] Blue, p. 31.
[195] Rychner and Henry, p. 274.
[196] Blue, p. 30.
[197] Jane H. M. Taylor, 2001, p. 38.
[198] Fein, 1980, p. 356.
[199] Hunt, 1999, p. 156.

rebellious action, just as is his drinking of the wine in the final stanza. Fein argues that Villon is drinking to 'escape the pain and shame which have just been inflicted',[200] but this is undoubtedly defiance and boasting, showing that even on his deathbed, Villon was able to perform sexually and drink, fittingly for a man so closely associated with the taverns. Fein correctly sees Villon's ending as 'unheroic'.[201] Some would argue that he met his end on the gallows, but however 'le povre Villon' died, it was not a glorious death. Interestingly, this fits in well with Villon's own life, since we know nothing of his death. He simply disappears. Fein makes no mention of the link between the 'morillon' of the wine and Hervé Morillon, the abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, who was well known for his arguments against the University of Paris, of which Villon was a part. Although the man was already dead, Villon metaphorically drinks his name, perhaps suggesting that the University won their battle in the end. Furthermore, if we take 'morillon' as a synecdoche, we can say that the wine represents the religion that caused Villon so many problems, as represented by Thibault d'Aussigny. By drinking this wine, he is defying religion and his tormentor to the very last, defiant to the end, despite all the hardships he has undergone.

So, we must ask, what does this mean? Was François Villon a latent homosexual who was seeking to attack and "out" his lovers and others that he knew to be homosexuals? The answer is that we will never know. The people referred to in Villon's work lived in the fifteenth century and so we can never hope to find out the truth about their sexuality. In the introduction, it was pointed out that since biographical information on Villon is scarce, critics have made jumps that are hard to

[200] Fein, 1980, p. 356.
[201] Fein, 1980, p. 355.

justify. Using the text to explain Villon and Villon to explain the text is a complicated, circular and ultimately futile method, although on the surface, it may appear to be fruitful. It is been shown in this chapter that the issue of sexuality within the text is one of the most contentious and confusing. Rather than attempting to discover if Villon was homosexual, I feel that it is better to treat the text as pure fiction and the characters within it as fictitious also. Villon has not written an autobiography and he has not written a social text that seeks to point out the problems in fifteenth-century society. Instead, he has created a powerful work of literature. If we take the phrase from Nancy Freeman Regalado's excellent article,[202] we are looking at the 'effet de réel', not the 'effet du réel'. It is all about an atmosphere of reality, as opposed to reality itself. Therefore, it does not matter if Villon was homosexual or if all of his allegations against the legatees are malicious and untrue. Rather, it is the way that he has expressed them that is of interest to us.

Yvan LePage, however, needs to make a statement about Villon's sexuality. He closes his study by stating that 'Villon a aimé les femmes, et surtout les filles de joie: cela est indéniable'.[203] However, he then argues that since Villon was such a complex character, might he not also have taken part in 'l'amour pédérastique'?[204] He is, thus, suggesting that Villon was bisexual. It appears a tenuous argument to throw the statement in at the end of an article designed to persuade the reader of Villon's homosexuality.

---

[202] Nancy Freeman Regalado, 'Effet de réel, effet du réel: Representation and Reference in Villon's *Testament*', *Yale French Studies,* 70 (1986), 63-77.
[203] LePage, p. 222.
[204] LePage, p. 223.

Christine Martineau-Génieys, as has been shown above, is attempting to write women out of the *Testament* altogether. Even Villon's supposed relationship with Katherine de Vausselles has vanished, to be replaced by a homosexual relationship. Like in the work of Evelyn Birge Vitz, Villon has very little freedom in making references to objects without them being given a sexual connotation. This chapter has shown that sexuality does feature predominantly in the *Testament*, but to ignore the role of women in their entirety does the *Testament* a disservice and also weakens Martineau-Génieys' arguments. Whilst she has undeniably proposed some fascinating interpretations, some of them are so far-fetched that they require an enormous suspension of disbelief.

Therefore, let us look at the idea of female sexuality. The overwhelming majority of Villon's legatees are male, leaving little scope for reference to the female. In fact, for every four men, there is only one woman. It could be suggested that this further emphasises the homosexual nature of the poetry, but the *raconteurs* of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* were all men and as I will show in the second chapter, this makes it part of homosocial, not homosexual discourse. However, in the *Testament*, there are two female characters of importance – la Grosse Margot and the Belle Hëaulmiere. The first of these is the most interesting, as Villon portrays himself here in the role of a pimp, with Margot as his prostitute. The name 'Margot' immediately links us into, as Jane Taylor points out, a 'textual network of farce and fabliau Margots and Marions who are 'ribaudes' and 'femme faciles'.[205] In stanza CL, the testator informs us that he loves Margot and that his feelings towards her are reciprocated. This is an interesting relationship between a pimp and prostitute. We have already seen the

[205] Jane H. M. Taylor, 2001, p. 147.

inference that Jacque James is a pimp, since he cannot marry all the women he loves. Villon's bequest is a particularly scabrous ballade, which should be recited to Margot, should anyone happen to meet her. It has been suggested that this ballade is an example of the *sottes chansons*, or obscene love poetry.[206]

The first stanza of the ballade describes Villon's pimping activities and ends with the refrain 'En ce bordeau ou tenons nostre estat' (line 1600), localizing the characters. David Mus has spent much time analyzing the ballade, and in his opinion, the 'bordeau' is more than a simple brothel. The locution 'tenir son estat' can be translated by the idea of 'holding court', creating the idea that the couple are being portrayed as royalty. As Freeman points out, Villon 'gleefully debunks the courtly ideal'.[207] For Mus, the 'bordeau' is a '*locus* de fertilité'.[208] The second stanza details Margot coming to bed. In line 1603, he says 'Voir ne la puis, mon cueur a mort la het'. This suggests a jealous reaction on the part of the pimp. He cannot bear to see Margot being treated in this way. The stanza starts to rise to a crescendo, with shouting and swearing, before the third begins with 'paix se fait'. This ties in with other representations of the sexual act in the period. In the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, we will see that sexual intercourse is often represented as a battle, involving swords, shields and other such weaponry. Following war, there is peace. Sexual intercourse has taken place and the pimp and his prostitute can now rest. However, it is also a homonymic pun, as Villon returns to scatology, informing us that Margot breaks wind. Villon's hypotyposis is impressive, as it is highly detailed. In line 1617, Margot climbs onto the testator, in order to not to waste her 'fruyt'. This is another example

[206] See Jane H. M. Taylor, 'Grosse Margot and *Sotte Chanson*: François Villon's Art of Adaptation' in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition*, ed. by Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 139-154.
[207] Freeman, pp. 95-96.
[208] Mus, p. 40.

of use of food-related metaphors throughout the *Testament*. THE HUMAN BODY IS FOOD is the most common conceptual metaphor, but this relates to the idea of sexual pleasure. If we look at line 1399, there is another reference to sexually-related fruit:

> Sy ne pers pas la graine que je sume
> En vostre champs, quant le fruyt me ressemble. (1398-99)

This use of an agricultural metaphor portrays the woman's body as a field, in which seed can be sown. This is not a particularly new or original metaphor, and we still talk of semen as 'seed' even today. However, it should be noted that in this stanza, we find the word 'fruyt' used in a more elevated register, as opposed to the low, base register of the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot*. 'Fruyt' here refers to the children of the couple concerned – the 'fruit of their labours', if you will. For la Grosse Margot, the word refers to simple carnal desire rather than a desire for procreation. However, the possibility that Margot is pregnant cannot be denied. As Mus puts it, 'le « fruit » pourrait dire son enfant, qui risque d'être écrasé si Margot ne « monte sur » son ami'.[209] After all, contraception in the Middle Ages was something that was yet to be properly understood. Indeed, in the *Sermons joyeux*, we see anal intercourse being recommended as a method of "safe sex".[210]

The final stanza of this sexual ballade is interesting. The testator portrays himself as a debauchee, a 'paillart'. He tells us that 'j'ay mon pain cuyt', another example of the use of proverbs within the text. Evelyn Birge Vitz tells us that 'Villon's "bread" is

---

[209] Mus, p. 39.
[210] See lines 215-226 of the *Sermon joyeux de Saint Jambon et de Sainte Andouille* in *Quatre Sermons joyeux*.

most suggestively phallic".[211] There are many different types of bread, some of which certainly could be considered as phallic, such as a baguette. However, there is no evidence in the text to cite this as a phallic symbol in use at the time. Instead, Villon is using proverbial discourse. As a criminal and a pimp, he is happy to live a life of debauchery and filth, sharing it with Margot. They are the King and Queen of the brothel. This is a ballade of defiance against the world and established social order, just as the *ballade de conclusion* mocks adversity. Margot is portrayed as a sexual being, powerful and controlling the testator in sexual relations. It is she who climbs on top of him. Freeman points out that this was a 'position widely condemned by contemporary theologians as sinful and unnatural'.[212] It is Margot who tells Villon what to do. The prostitute seems to be in charge of the pimp, a further sign of the reversal in gender roles that we have seen throughout the text. It is interesting to note that the same thing happens in tale 55 of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*. Vitz sees particular textual evidence for an inversion of gender roles when Villon writes 'Riant, m'assiet son poing sur mon sommet' in line 1613. It has been a universal interpretation to read 'sommet' as 'head', since it means 'summit'. However, Vitz argues that, and I quote the passage in full:

> It is only because a man's head is most frequently his physical summit and is conceived as his moral and intellectual summit, that this transfer of meaning has taken place. But in the situation in which Villon describes himself here, his head is obviously not his uppermost organ. In other words, instead of his noblest, theologically loftiest organ, his head – reason and will – being at the top, in this case this position of supremacy is usurped by his male member.

[211] Vitz, p. 36.
[212] Freeman, p. 96.

> His physiology, and hence his psychology and intellectual stature, are inverted, perverted.[213]

This is another example of a critic looking for an alternative explanation, when there is simply no need to see further sexual meanings. Surely, if we suggest that Margot is in charge of the lovemaking, then there is no need to suggest that she is touching his penis? Could she not be simply patting him on the head in an affectionate or even patronising gesture? Vitz's reading is distinctly unconvincing, as whilst there are justifiable grounds to see an erection in the *ballade de conclusion*, they do not exist here. There also seems to be little evidence that Villon has lost his reason. We see in the first two stanzas of the ballade the idea of violence and the passion of lovemaking, conceived as a battle, but by this time, it is all over and the couple are in the post-coital moments. Another possible explanation for Villon's loss of reason is the idea that they are both drunk, since alcohol clouds and confuses the senses and judgement, but the reading remains unpersuasive.

In addition, in this stanza, there is an acrostic. There has been some debate over whether it spells VILLON or VILLONE, in a feminisation. Villon has been happy to feminize the names of his legatees, so is it therefore so unlikely that he may feminize his own name? It is possible that it symbolizes Villon and his lover coming together in unison. Walter Blue tells us that 'Villone is a hellish creature, a perverted blend of two personalities in one – Villon and his sterile whore. It is death'.[214] This is one of the more peculiar interpretations of the ballade and since it is so hyperbolically written, it is enough to raise a smile. Of course, there is another possibility entirely –

[213] Vitz, p. 121.
[214] Blue, p. 34.

that la Grosse Margot never existed as a person, and was merely the name of one of the taverns that Villon frequented in Paris. However, given that all the other legatees to whom Villon refers are real, it would be illogical to question the veracity of Margot's existence. This is not an autobiographical text, but given Villon's behaviour, to assume that he had never visited a brothel would be odd indeed. As Vitz puts it, 'Villon's Margot is as fixed and immutable in her identity as if she were indeed but the painted 'sign' of a fat harlot'.[215] There is no need to question who she is.

Moreover, it could also be argued that all of Villon's heterosexual escapades relate to prostitutes. His main love has always been said to be Katherine de Vausselles, who is introduced in line 661. Despite the best efforts of researchers such as Champion, Vausselles has remained unidentified, but modern interpretations suggest that she is nothing more than a prostitute, particularly given that the name 'Vausselles' evokes the 'petites vallées' of the female body, in an erotic sense. According to the testator in lines 657-661, he was beaten naked on the orders of this woman. Jelle Koopmans, however, argues that the 'groseilles' that Villon mentions refer to the buboes of leprosy or a venereal disease.[216] If she were a prostitute, then it is possible that she did pass on a sexual disease, due to the lack of contraception. However, I find this a less than compelling interpretation. Throughout the *Testament*, we have seen that the testator portrays himself as an 'amant martyr'. He is badly treated by women and love and there is clearly a great deal of bitterness in his lines on this subject. It is more likely that Villon attempted to woo Katherine and failed, rather than catching a disease or that Katherine was actually another name for Ythier Merchant.

---

[215] Vitz, p. 104.
[216] Jelle Koopmans, 'Groseilles et Vaucelles', in *Villon at Oxford: The Drama of the Text,* ed. by Michael Freeman and Jane H. M. Taylor (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 129-50 (p. 138).

Therefore, to conclude, what we have seen in this chapter is a layered clash of interpretations. On the one hand, we have an entirely plausible, original, satirical will. On the other, we have a humorous, mocking and ambiguous document with multiple meanings. With so much material already written on Villon, and with such a limited corpus, there exists the danger of running out of things to say. After all, if a ballade has already been studied ninety-nine times, why should the hundredth be any different? I accept that Villon's text contains many in-jokes, puns and bawdy humour, and given the passage of time and relative paucity of information, we will never be able to discover what was intended in each and every stanza. However, to impose upon the text homosexual, or heavily-sexualized readings seems almost unfair. John Fox points out that:

> The surface meaning, the one obviously intended, is forceful enough, as it usually is throughout Villon's poetry. There is no need to be side-tracked into hypothetical secondary meanings which have no more justification than Tzara's anagrams.[217]

I do not follow Fox's comments here. As I have shown above, there are many 'secondary meanings' that enrich the text. If we return, yet again, to the case of the 'branc' bequeathed to Merchant, we saw that it had three possible interpretations, all of which were valid, interesting and made for rewarding reading of the stanza. If we take the case of Thibault d'Aussigny, I noted that Jean Dufournet was able to find at least five different interpretations of a simple binominal expression. Essentially, John Fox would deny us these possibilities, taking only the surface meaning. It is clear that

[217] Fox, p. 102.

in his *Testament*, Villon is exploiting the ability of language to have more than one meaning, as shown by his various puns through homophony. Those critics who attempt to justify specious interpretations on tenuous textual evidence seem to be looking for something new to say, when perhaps there is nothing left. If a surface interpretation is persuasive and credible, then it is acceptable, but we must not dismiss subsidiary meanings out of hand. Fundamentally, in this chapter, I have argued for a limit in terms of interpretations. We cannot take every sword to be a phallus, but we cannot deny the possibility of it. It is necessary to interpret each individual image in terms of its context within the text. If a subsidiary meaning of 'phallus' would render the primary meaning of 'sword' confusing, then we need to be able to recognise this and discount it. There is a danger of going too far in a sexual interpretation. If a critic proposes a completely new interpretation, but there is no evidence in other texts of the period for this, then we need to treat this new idea with caution. This said, the secondary, and in some cases, tertiary, meanings add new layers of complexity to the *Testament*.

Chapter 2: Representations of the Male in selected Fifteenth-century Texts

This chapter seeks to examine the representations of the male in Villon's work and other contemporary texts. Whilst I will look at as many representations of different male figures as possible, it is necessary to note that Villon's testator is particularly solipsistic. Having begun to talk about someone else, he is quick to make himself the centre of attention once again. By its very nature, a will is obviously a personal document, but as we know, this is a satirical will. In the previous chapter, we looked at the associations between the bequests and the legatees made by the critics. It was necessary to decipher what Villon was implying by bequeathing cloves of ginger, for example. What did this bequest say about the person who received it? In order to look at the male figure as a whole, it is therefore necessary to take a step back and look beyond the bequests themselves so that the imagery used can be examined. In my first chapter, I have identified various legatees whose bequests have been shown to have sexual connotations. In this chapter, it will be necessary to refer to some of them again, but in less detail, since we are going to examine how they are explicable in terms of metaphor theory. Evelyn Birge Vitz writes that 'a symbolic equivalence, once established between two words or objects, extends in its general effect to other words with more or less the same meaning, or to words pertaining to the same domain of reality'.[218] This is true of metaphor theory in general. We are not only talking about castles, but we could also include the term fortress, for example, allowing us to propose conceptual metaphors such as THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING. If we look at swords, we can also discuss daggers, weapons and arms, as all these items belong to the same semantic field. The word may change, but the concept remains the same. Firstly, however, we must identify the key body parts mentioned by Villon and

[218] Vitz, p. 29.

the connotations associated with them. I do not want to list all the body parts, since Luca Pierdominici has already done this in his study.[219] There is no sexual connotation or real importance to be found in a mention of the 'oreille' or 'gencive', for example. However, Villon never refers directly to the penis (though he does use 'coulles' and 'couillon') or vagina, but always hints at them through bawdy puns and circumlocutions, thus allowing his audience to see a hidden layer of meaning within the *Testament*. Interestingly, Cristina Azuela sees this as part of a tradition in verbal games. She writes that 'la pratique de présenter les allusions érotiques sous la forme d'un jeu verbal (double entente, équivoque, métaphore malicieuse) vient d'une longue tradition'.[220] Villon, as we have seen from the first chapter, is certainly at the top of this game. There is further evidence of this in Leonard W. Johnson's book, *Poets as Players*. His very title evokes the idea of a game. Johnson writes that, 'it has always been the artist's prerogative to play with what he or she perceives as reality, to imagine variations of it or evasions from it'.[221] Villon and his contemporaries play with language, changing it and moulding it for humour. Johnson writes, 'what one finds is the poet indulging in the play of wits, either crudely, through sexual jokes and allusion, or more delicately, like Alain Chartier, through irony and ambiguity'.[222] He may refer to Chartier, but he could just as well be referring to Villon, whose work is full of the techniques Johnson mentions.

Before we examine the metaphors used to refer to the male, it is necessary to look at the actual description of the testator himself, since it permits us to form a picture of him, even though it is fragmented. I use the word 'fragmented' with justification,

---

[219] Pierdominici, pp. 209-210.
[220] Azuela, p. 35.
[221] Leonard W. Johnson, *Poets as Players: Theme and Variation in Late Medieval French Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 286.
[222] Johnson, p. 5.

since the testator displays multiple personae. More than just the 'povre Villon', there are other descriptions of him. In the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot*, for example, he is a pimp, but he is also a pauper, student and a martyred lover. Firstly, let us consider his age and physical condition.

We know from the first line of the *Testament* that he is only in his thirties – 'mon trentïesme aage'. Yet, in line 179, he tells us that he is 'triste, pally, plus noir que meure'. This links to line 316 of the *Lais*, where he describes himself as 'sec et noir comme (ung) escouvillon' and also to the *Ballades des pendus*, where the hanged men say that 'le soleil [nous a] deceschez et noirciz' (line 22). This definitely creates the idea of old age, of an asthenic body weakened and blackened by hardship. However, stanza LXXII gives us a slightly different picture:

> Je congnois approcher ma seuf,
> Je crache blanc comme coton
> Jacoppins groz comme ung estuef.
> Qu'esse a dire ? Que Jehanneton
> Plus ne me tient pour valleton,
> Mais ung viel usé rocquart.
> De viel porte voix et le ton,
> Et ne suis q'un jeune cocquart (729-736)

The testator portrays himself as an old, broken man, but old before his time. Immediately, we see the use of proverbial discourse as he coughs up balls of white

phlegm, as big as tennis balls.[223] There is also a pun here on the 'capuchons de laine-blanche, que portent les Jacobins',[224] as Villon continues his mocking of religion. Whilst he is only a young man, it seems that people take him to be an old man. Why should he be coughing so badly? This question has puzzled several commentators, leading them to assume from the textual evidence that Villon was ill, suffering from tuberculosis[225] or chronic bronchitis.[226] However, there is another possible interpretation. Mus states that '« cracher » veut dire *éjaculer*, dans le jargon obscène, et « estuef » désigne les organes génitaux'.[227] He then cites Shakespeare's *Henry IV* as evidence, pointing out that Eric Partridge has also glossed this, writing, 'Falstaff's 'I would that I would never spit white again' (2, *Henry IV,* I, ii) apparently refers to seminal emission'.[228] However, the *Dictionnaire érotique* has two possibilities for 'cracher'. One is simply 'avoir soif', but when referring to 'cracher dedans' or 'cracher sans toussir', these do have the meanings of 'to ejaculate'.[229] We must also take notice of the name 'Jehanneton'. Whilst the usual approach would be to interpret this as 'everywoman', derivations of Jehanneton appear elsewhere in the *Testament* as the name of a prostitute.[230] It is not beyond possibility that the testator is describing a sexual escapade here, and we can already start to see the inherent contradictions and obfuscations that relate to references to the male body in Villon's work. It should also be noted that the age of 30 is a topos. Rupert T. Pickens writes that 'it is the age of the

[223] See James W. Hassell Jr., *Middle French Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases* (Toronto: Pontifical Insitute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), p. 85.
[224] Pierdominici, p. 168.
[225] Lôo, p. 108.
[226] Yve-Plessis, p. 29.
[227] Mus, p. 338.
[228] Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary and Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 226.
[229] See the *Dictionnaire érotique*, p. 176.
[230] For example, line 1629.

human maturity of Christ, as well as, approximately, that of His death'.[231] In the *Testament*, there are instances in which Villon is portraying himself as the Christ figure in the hagiographical technique known as 'imitatio Christi', or identification with Christ, which I will examine later in this chapter.

In line 828, the testator describes himself as 'plus maigre que chimere' and we learn more about him in the 'verset'. We are told that:

> Il fut rez, chief, barbe, sourcil,
> Comme ung navet c'on ret ou pelle. (1896-97)

This passage seems to suggest that Villon was shaven entirely bald. There is no evidence for this other than that which we have in the text, but it is speculated that this was a punishment inflicted upon him by Thibault d'Aussigny, thus resulting in Villon's vicious jibes and insinuations in the *Testament*.[232] By the removal of his tonsure, he would be stripped of his clerical status and thus no longer subject to the justice of the ecclesiastical courts, but the civil courts. This is reinforced by the next stanza of the 'verset', where the testator tells us that 'Rigueur le transmist en exil/Et lui frappa au cul la pelle' (lines 1900-01). Rychner and Henry cite a number of examples of this form of corporal punishment, but there is no evidence that it was linked to the ecclesiastical courts.[233] Merritt R. Blakeslee, in his Freudian reading of the *Testament*, suggests that the idea of the testator being shaven could be 'une

---

[231] Rupert T. Pickens, 'The Concept of Woman in Villon's *Testament*', in *Medieval Studies in Honor of Robert White Linker*, ed. by Brian Dutton and others (Valencia: Editorial Castilia, 1973), pp. 163-76 (p. 170).
[232] See André Burger, 'La Dure Pison de Meung', in *Studi in onore di Italo Siciliano*, ed. by Italo Siciliano (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1966) II, 149-51.
[233] Rychner and Henry, II, 263.

allusion oblique à la castration',[234] particularly when taken along with lines 1964-5 – 'Trop plus me font mal c'onques maiz/Barbe, cheveux, penil, sourcys'. However, this is an attempt to link two passages that do not seem to go together. It is true that both contain enumeration in order for Villon to build a cumulative effect, but in the first passage, we have the character being shaven and in the second, he complains of pains in various parts of the body. Blakeslee underlines 'penil' in order to make his point. Rather than being an allusion to castration anxiety, it is more likely that the testator is feeling the effects of some disease, perhaps of a sexual nature. The association of blades with castration is obvious, but it appears to be an unlikely opportunity for a Freudian reading.

The other references to the testator's own body are limited. For example, in the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot*, he describes himself in bed with her and talks of his 'sommet' and 'jambot' (lines 1613-14). This is an example of the realism of the Villonian description. He takes what could be an everyday scene and describes it. The ballade as a whole may be scabrous, but his skill at describing the mundane is apparent. In the *Ballade de conclusion*, he swears on his 'coullon'. As I stated in the first chapter, the solemn process of swearing an oath is being mocked here and Villon is moving from courtly vocabulary to obscenity. This last ballade reinforces the idea of the poet's multiple personality changes, switching through various stages of life at will, before "dying" at the end of the poem. In the first chapter, I examined the sexual interpretation of this ballade, but another interesting reading has also been proposed. Karl D. Uitti sees this ballade as an example of 'imitatio Christi'. This idea is characterized by a desire to imitate Christ and his virtues. Uitti writes:

[234] cf. p. 14.

> The human Jesus died after being stabbed by a lance; he was dressed in a loin cloth-like rag ... he died a witness to Love... like Christ before he gave up the ghost, Villon drank a swig of sour wine (or rot-gut, something fairly close to vinegar).[235]

Uitti's statements, though he does not link them directly to the text, are essentially correct. Rather than being stabbed with a lance, Jesus' side was pierced by a spear known as the Spear of Longinus due to the name of the centurion who bore it.[236] This would obviously parallel the 'esguillon' of the ballade, with the rag that he was wearing being represented by the 'cotillon'. Fein notes that we can see in Villon's clothing being left on bushes, 'a parallel to the division of Christ's clothing among the Roman soldiers'.[237] We can go even further. Before crucifixion, the condemned man was whipped, a practice known as 'scourging'. Villon talks of 'le ranguillon/D'un baudrier' (lines 2016-7) and this image of a belt buckle is very similar to that of the whips used in scourging. There is nothing surprising in Villon attempting to link himself to Christ. Villon claims that he died a martyr, as did Christ. As a marginalized, criminal figure, the idea of him being analogous to Christ is subversive, as Christ was meant to be a holy figure, sent to save the world. Little is holy about Villon! Fein sees an alternative possibility here. He writes:

> The evocation of the Crucifixion may indicate, or at least suggest, that the persona of the *Testament* is moving toward a state of grace. By identifying the

[235] Karl D. Uitti, 'Villon's "Le Grand Testament" and the Poetics of Marginality', *Modern Philology*, 93 (1995), 139-160 (p. 160).
[236] For more information, see Rose Jeffries Peebles, *The Legend of Longinus in Ecclesiastical Tradition and in English Literature, and its Connection with the Grail* (Baltimore: Furst, 1911).
[237] Fein, 1984, p. 79.

> martyr of his poem with Christ on the cross, Villon elevates the suffering of the former, endowing it with new meaning.[238]

I do not follow Fein here. He seems to be taking the association with Christ as a positive step, as though Villon is attempting to redeem himself through a possible association with Christianity. Given the multiple personae and attitudes displayed in the Testament, it is hard to choose a definitive suggestion. However, given that the ballade is clearly subversive, with the mocking of legal oaths and possible sexual arousal, I find it much more likely that Villon is again usurping traditional ideas. After all, it is also possible to read him as the Antichrist. In the *ballade de la Grosse Margot*, we see the line, 'Par les costez se prent cest Antecrist'. There are three possible readings of this line, since the manuscript lacks punctuation. Firstly, it could metaphorically refer to Margot. Secondly, it could be Villon commenting on Margot, and finally, it could be Margot insulting Villon. In her study, Vitz opts for the third possibility,[239] but the first two, describing Margot, seem much more compelling.

It has been made clear, therefore, that specific references to the testator's body cannot be taken at face value. It is legitimate to suspect that Villon is playing with ideas and expectations and wants to obscure reality as much as possible. In addition, he is using pathos. These descriptions of a broken man are intended to arouse pity in his audience and make them believe that he is a victim. Since there are few direct references to the body, let us look at the references that appear through innuendo or phallic symbolism. It has been argued that there are a plethora of phallic symbols present in the *Testament*, or, as Martineau-Génieys puts it, 'une certain obsession du sexe

[238] Fein, 1984, p. 80
[239] Vitz, p. 131.

masculin'.[240] Her list is ample: 'branc, pignon, havet, poupart, tallemouse, luth, quenouille, pignon [*sic*], écouvette, grès, manche de houe, etc.'.[241] I have already discussed the majority of these metaphors in my previous chapter, so there is no need to treat them again here in depth. However, we must take the individual metaphors and group them according to the conceptual metaphors to which they belong.

'Branc', as we saw previously, has the primary meaning of 'sword'. Its secondary meaning is that of 'phallus' and a tertiary meaning, arrived at through homophony, would be 'excrement'. We have already seen the word 'passot', or 'dagger' (line 1594) identified also. By association with the semantic field of weaponry, we can read this as a phallic symbol. In the 28th of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, for example, we see the word 'dague' used in a military sense, making the sexual allusion explicit: 'et ne fut oncques en sa puissance de tirer sa dague pour esprouver et savoir s'elle pourroit prendre sur ses cuirasses'.[242] The reference to the female body is also obvious, but we will explore this in the next chapter. It is also common in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* to refer to the penis as a lance. It is, as Luca Pierdominici writes, 'un noyau sémique'.[243] There are various possible reasons for this, but since the tales were composed at the court of the Duke of Burgundy, all of the men involved in their telling would have probably fought on the battlefields or had a close association with the various wars fought in the country at the time. Furthermore, the conceptual metaphor of LOVE IS WAR belongs to a long literary tradition that dates back hundreds of years. Having only just referred to the penis as 'dague' in *nouvelle* 28, it

[240] Martineau-Génieys , p. 250.
[241] Martineau-Génieys, p. 250.
[242] *CNn,* p. 194.
[243] Pierdominici, p. 75.

is then described as 'lance' only a few lines later.[244] In *nouvelle* 15, we hear a man saying, 'je suis mal fourny de grosse lance'.[245] The phrase 'rompre une lance' becomes a euphemism for the sexual act, as we see in *nouvelle* 29, where the husband is able to break only the one! The same phrase also appears in *nouvelles* 30, 35, 59, 62 and 90, showing the importance of the metaphor. A further example appears in the *Facecies de Poge*. In tale LXXXVI, the narrator tells us that 'elle estoit fort honteuse et si craignoyt fort a attendre le coup de la lance', before going on to add, '... disoit a son moyne qu'il avoit trop gros bois et qu'elle ne le sçavoit porter'.[246] The word 'bois' can also mean lance; thus, we see two references within a couple of lines. Leonard W. Johnson notes that, in medieval literature, the phallic connotation of weaponry was clear. 'Swords, lances, hammers and mallets abound', he notes, [247] but Charles Jernigan goes even further, stating that equating 'arms or weapons with the male sex organ, is probably one of the oldest continuously used puns in European languages'.[248] All of these items of weaponry belong to the conceptual metaphor, SEX IS WAR. Mapping is taking place between the lance and the penis, allowing the sexual act to be represented by the idea of the battle. The dagger penetrating the armour therefore represents copulation. David LaGuardia argues that, in the *CNn*:

> Sex for these male narrators is a joust whose end is the submission of the defeated female character. Moreover, sex for them is essentially equivalent to

[244] *CNn*, p. 195.
[245] *CNn*, p. 107.
[246] Tardif, p. 207.
[247] Johnson, p. 254.
[248] Charles Jernigan, 'Arma, Arme, Arm: The Literary Use of a Bawdy Pun in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance', *Fifteenth Century Studies,* 29 (1982), 99-116 (p. 99).

> rape, since it is accomplished usually against the resistance of the female characters, whom they understand to want sex beyond all measure.[249]

This is an odd assertion to say the least. His first sentence is reasonable and credible. If we look at *nouvelle* 55, for example, we see the use of the verb 'matter',[250] or 'to checkmate'. This is the only example of the use of the verb in a sexual context, but it conveys the idea of a defeat and submission by the vanquished nevertheless. However, to assert then that sex is equivalent to rape seems odd. There are various occasions in the *CNn* where women are seen to be desiring sexual encounters, including *nouvelle* 55, where a girl with the plague sleeps with as many men as possible, or *nouvelle* 99, where a woman's attempts to have an extra-marital relationship are thwarted. Many of the stories deal with adultery, so there is no question that these women are not interested in sex and have to be forced into it. Nevertheless, the fact that these metaphors all belong to the SEX IS WAR conceptual metaphor does suggest a lack of consent. War, by nature, does imply the use of force. Once the siege of a town is lifted by force, rape and pillaging usually follow. If a sword is being used, the force of the action is obvious. It must be stated that the composers of these works have a choice of metaphors. They could resort to courtly, or romantic, love poetry, for example, and have to choose the metaphor that best suits their needs. An all-male environment, such as a group of football supporters, is unlikely to be employing the same language as a group of females, just as a group of influential politicians would not use the same language and rhetoric as a group of sailors, for example. Essentially, the storytelling in the ducal court could be seen as akin to men sitting in the taverns of Paris, or even modern-day pubs, and recounting

[249] LaGuardia, p. 70.
[250] *CNn*, p. 349.

stories of their sexual exploits. Even in the modern era, we tend to use the term, 'sexual conquests', implying a victory and thus, as a corollary, a defeat. Therefore, LaGuardia's statement has some merit. However, the way in which his statement is written implies a substantial generalization, which is not necessarily the case.

Therefore, we have seen various suggestions of phallic symbolism within these fifteenth-century texts. These interpretations are entirely acceptable. Their sheer prevalence in the range of texts explored shows their widespread usage. However, there is a danger of interpreting every object in the same way. As I stated in my introduction, for Vitz, a sword can never be a sword, but is always a phallus – 'the symbolic meaning of the *branc* of strophe XCIX will make itself felt every time we meet a sword, by whatever name'.[251] This is a dangerous assumption, as there are clearly paragraphs that do not need to have a sexual interpretation, as the original is perfectly valid. Vitz looks at stanza CIX, where there is a reference to an 'espee lionnoise'. She states that 'the presence of 'sword', with its high sexually symbolic potential, is troubling in a passage like this one.'[252] It is true that the word belongs to the semantic field of arms, but it does not have to be a sexual sword. Vitz later contradicts herself, saying that 'it would most certainly be abusive to assert that every time we meet in the text one of the words which I have discussed it is explicitly or even implicitly sexual'.[253] What Vitz seems to come to realise over the course of her chapter on symbolic contamination is that it is not a matter of contamination per se, but interpretation. Does adding a sexual connotation to the word actually give a deeper layer of meaning or does it simply erroneously confuse the issue? Stanza CIX is a bequest to Cholet, who is believed to have been a barrel-maker. The testator says

[251] Vitz, p. 31.
[252] Vitz, p. 31.
[253] Vitz, p. 41.

that he will have Cholet trade his tools for this sword, but allows him to keep the mallet. The testator then mentions 'bruyt ne noise' and in the Thuasne edition, we find a story of how, having become a sergeant, Cholet accidentally sounded a false alarm within the city.[254] Therefore, to make the 'epee lionnoise' a sexual sword would be a mistake. Cholet would have swapped his tools for a sword since he was becoming a sergeant.

A further example of Vitz's haste to spot contamination in metaphors is in stanza XC. In my first chapter, I discussed stanza XCIX in terms of the pun on 'bourse' – scrotum and purse, citing the same sexual joke in the *fabliaux*. Stanza CX contains a 'bourse de soye', which is deep and wide. Undoubtedly, there is a sexual connotation here. However, Vitz interprets this as 'the sexual love of a rich and potent man; of a man whose sexual purse is full, and who is dressed in silk'.[255] The stanza is addressed to 'rose', which, in some editions, erroneously receives a capital letter.[256] It is likely that this is a generic name, referring to woman in general, as opposed to a woman in particular. Which woman would not like a silk purse full of money? If the testator were referring to prostitutes, this would be even more welcome. In the last two lines of the stanza, the testator says 'mais pendu soit il, qui je soye,/Qui luy laira escu(s) ne targe' (lines 916-7). Vitz claims that this line means 'let only a sexually competent, "well-hung" man undertake to give Marthe seminal "money"'.[257] This interpretation borders on the bizarre and entirely incredible. The idea of someone being 'well-hung' is very much a part of modern phraseology. This said, there is one reference to the

[254] François Villon, *Œuvres*, ed. by Louis Thuasne, 3 vols (Paris : Picard, 1923), II, (302).
[255] Vitz, p. 33.
[256] For example, Luca Pierdominici's study.
[257] Vitz, p. 33.

phallus as 'le pendu' in the *Devinettes françaises du Moyen Age*,[258] and in the *Roman de la Rose*, the testicles are referred to as 'les pendans'.[259] Nevertheless, I feel that the only hanging that would have been on the minds of Villon's fifteenth-century audience would have been that of criminals on the gallows. Whilst the stanza is full of sexual innuendo, Vitz's reading goes too far in the search for a sexual interpretation of the Villonian verse. The best way to read this line would be to see it as proverbial locution and not one with erotic connotations.

A further conceptual metaphor that relates to sex is HUMAN BODY PARTS ARE FOOD. The best example of this is in stanza CXI of the *Testament*, in which the testator bequeaths Arab ginger 'pour joindre cuz et couëctes/Et couldre jambons et andoulles' (1123-24).[260] The sexual associations here are clear and we see the use of 'andoulle' as a metaphor for the penis. This is a common sexual metaphor, as we see in the *Sermon joyeux de saint Jambon et de sainte Andouille.*[261] This parodic sermon has several layers of meaning. The first layer evokes a hagiographic parody, in which the life and martyrdom of the two saints is recounted. However, there is also a very explicit, erotic level. Take, for example, the passage:

> Qu'arez tousjours bon appetit
> Au mactin d'avoir ung petit
> De Sainct Jambon ou Saincte Andoulle! (lines 128-130)

[258] See the *Dictionnaire érotique*, p. 494.
[259] See the *Roman de la Rose*, line 19639.
[260] cf. p. 46.
[261] See *Quatre Sermons joyeux,* pp. 47-56, and the *Dictionnaire érotique*, pp. 27-8.

Another parodic sermon based on the phallic connotation of the sausage, the *Sermon de l'endouille*, also exists.[262] Leonard W. Johnson cites other examples of the use of this metaphor, such as in the work of Eustache Deschamps. He quotes:

> Ce mangier ci lui est tresbons,
> D'une andoille entre deux jambons,
> Qu'il soit roide et non pas rostie.[263]

The explicit nature of the image is clear – someone who likes to eat a stiff sausage! It is interesting that the *Dictionnaire erotique* cites only Villon when referring to 'jambon', when it is clear that the metaphor is in use elsewhere.[264] Johnson notes that 'a chitterling sausage hardly appears to confer much phallocratic dignity on the male ... even though its shape may designate it as an apt comparison'.[265] This raises an interesting issue. Richard Dyer claims that the 'limp penis can never match up to the mystique that has kept it hidden from view for the last couple of centuries, and even the erect penis often looks awkward, stuck on to the man's body as if it is not part of him'.[266] If we accept this, Johnson's assertion is interesting. Why is the metaphor of the sausage so common? If the male is continuing to establish the mystique of the phallus, why not use more dignified words? In this case, we could argue that metaphors such as 'lance', 'bois' or 'passot' are dignified, since they imply power, strength and virility, but this does not appear to be the case for the conceptual metaphor, HUMAN BODY PARTS ARE FOOD. The lamprey of *nouvelle* 38 of the

---

[262] *Recueil de sermons joyeux,* pp. 185-205.
[263] Johnson, p. 254.
[264] *Dictionnaire érotique*, p. 364.
[265] Johnson, p. 255.
[266] Richard Dyer, 'Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up', in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 265-76 (pp. 275-6).

CNn, representing the phallus, also is not a particularly dignified image.[267] It may be described as 'belle et grosse', but at the end of the day, it is an eel, which is a creature (and item of food) lacking in glamour and gravity. One of the explanations for this could be the idea that food is taken into the body. My quotation above from Deschamps emphasises the eating of the sausage. It enters the body and later leaves it, just as the phallus enters and departs. Furthermore, it is not a violent image and suggests enjoyment, as people tend to take their time in eating and do so willingly and with pleasure. Previously, I discussed LaGuardia's statement that sex was equivalent to rape for the narrators of the *CNn* due to the prevalence of the SEX IS WAR conceptual metaphor. This suggests that there is no enjoyment, where both quotations I have cited propose that the woman in question likes having some sausage!

Still in the semantic field of food, Evelyn Birge Vitz argues that Villon's references to 'bread' are of a sexual nature.[268] As shown by my analysis of the *ballade de la Grosse Margot*, Villon uses a common proverbial locution when he writes, 'j'ay mon pain cuit'. The same phrase appears in the farces.[269] Vitz states that the bread is 'most suggestively phallic'.[270] This seems an unlikely interpretation and betrays a lack of understanding of the proverb, which could be translated into English along the lines of 'I've got it made'. Villon is happy to lie in the filth of the brothel. The idea that his bread is baked does not suggest that he has an erection or that there is anything particularly phallic about this bread.

---

[267] cf. p. 92.
[268] cf. pp. 64-5.
[269] *Recueil des farces françaises inédites du XVe siècle*, ed. by G. Cohen (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1949), VII, 141.
[270] Vitz, p. 36.

A final conceptual metaphor to be examined here is HUMAN BODY PARTS ARE ANIMALS. The penis is represented as an animal in various texts, such as the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*. In the 25th *nouvelle*, the male member is described as a 'furon', or 'ferret'.[271] It is also portrayed as a young horse in the *CNn* and *Sermons joyeux*. In the *Sermon plaisant*, for example, the author writes, 'poulane/Roide comme ung cornet de vacquier'.[272] One of the most common locutions for the sexual act in the Middle Ages is 'faire la beste a deux dos'.[273] This animalization of the sexual act suggests not an act intended for procreation, but an animalistic, carnal act carried out only through sheer animal desire. In the *ballade de la Grosse Margot*, Villon tells his clients to return when 'vous serez en ruyt' (line 1599). This is a further reference to the animal-related sexuality that pervades the *Testament*. Dufournet argues that, through animalization, 'Villon détruit la nature humaine; qu'en créant des monstres mi-humains, mi-animaux, il traduit le monde pervers qui l'entoure'.[274] This is certainly an interesting view of the Villonian universe. It is clear from the *ballade de la Grosse Margot* that the testator enjoys his marginal status and it is also obvious from the *Testament* as a whole that Villon likes to confound his readers and turn their expectations on their head. As much as he is 'povre Villon' in terms of money, status and physical appearance, he is also showing himself to be the 'povre Villon' in terms of moral values. He is inverting the idea of moral rectitude as well as expectations. Foehr-Janssens states that 'la représentation de l'acte amoureux au moyen d'équivoques grivoises trahit, mais exprime aussi la charge libidinale qui imprègne la

[271] *CNn*, p. 161.
[272] *Recueil de sermons joyeux*, p. 486, lines 158-59.
[273] See, for example, line 197 of *Le Badin qui se loue* in *Farces du Moyen Age*, ed. by André Tissier (Paris: Flammarion, 1984), and p. 68 of the *Dictionnaire érotique*.
[274] Dufournet, 1984, pp. 190-91.

narration'.[275] Although she may be writing on the *CNn*, her commentary is equally valid for Villon's text and indeed, any of the medieval texts that this study examines.

Since we are referring to the representation of the male within the Villonian *oeuvre*, it should also be noted that there is an animalization, or dehumanization, of some of his male legatees. We have already discussed his pun on 'cerf' and 'serf' in the opening of the *Testament*, and in this chapter, we have noted Villon's use of simile as he describes himself as 'plus maigre que chimere' (line 828), as well as 'ung viel usé roquart' (line 734). However, the most interesting references are to his legatees. In stanza CX, Jehan Le Lou receives a long, concealing cloak. Jean Dufournet points out that his name and the idea of hiding associate him with the werewolf.[276] This is the same for Jehan Riou, who receives wolf heads to eat, and is told to wrap himself in the skins. Since this bequest follows that of the Orfevre de boys, Vitz sees symbolic contamination here. She does not see any references to werewolves, but states that 'these "six-head of wolf meat", that is, low-grade meat, may refer to a particularly unappetizing group of feminine morsels, snatched from their butcher-lovers'.[277] This is a particularly unconvincing reading. Vitz is trying hard to make this stanza fit into the conceptual metaphor of THE HUMAN BODY IS FOOD, but this is not suitable here. This is a simple pun on Riou's profession, since he was a dealer in skins. Other names are deformed in the *Testament* deliberately by Villon, but some depend on the individual manuscript reading. Dufournet again notes the variations of the name of Robin Trouscaille: Trascaille, Trassecaille, Trouscaille and Troussecaille, the second

[275] Y. Foehr-Janssens, 'Pour une littérature du derrière: Licence du corps féminin et stratégie du sens dans les trois premiers récits des *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*' in *Riens ne m'est seur que la chose incertaine: études sur l'art d'écrire au Moyen Âge: offertes à Eric Hicks par ses élèves, collègues, amies et amis*, ed. by J.-C. Mühlethaler and Denis Billotte (Geneva: Slatkine, 2001), pp. 277-291 (p. 289).
[276] Dufournet, 1984, p. 181.
[277] Vitz, p. 35.

suggesting someone who pursues prostitutes.[278] In stanza CXXXV, Michel Culdoe becomes Michault Cul d'Ou, his name making for an obvious play on words. As with any of the legatees, this use of animalization mocks and ridicules them, changing them from rich financiers, in the case of Culdoe, to a pretext for laughter. Their status is heavily reduced in the bizarre, burlesque world of the *Testament* and this animalization shows yet another way in which the male is represented by Villon.

It is clear from the above that there are many phallic symbols and hidden references to the penis within the text. Why? Psychoanalytic theory makes much of the importance and power of the phallus. Richard Dyer points out that 'the image of the phallus as power is widespread to the point of near-universality, all the way from tribal and early Greek fertility symbols to the language of pornography, where the penis is endlessly described as a weapon, a tool, a source of terrifying power'.[279] Dyer's words regarding weaponry immediately take us back to the sexual military vocabulary of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*. I do not intend to imply that the *nouvelles* are a pornographic work, but we could undoubtedly make a convincing argument for their misogynistic nature. The fact that modern pornography is still referring to the penis as a weapon suggests that it is drawing upon the metaphorical traditions that were so common in the past and remain current even today. In referring to the male pin-up, Dyer also states that, with 'the clenched fists, the bulging muscles, the hardened jaws, *the proliferation of phallic symbols* – they are all straining after what can hardly ever be achieved, the embodiment of the phallic mystique' (my emphasis).[280] Since these

[278] Jean Dufournet, 'Villon: Ambiguïté et Carnaval' in *Villon, hier et aujourd'hui : actes du Colloque pour le cinq-centième anniversaire de l'impression du 'Testament' de Villon, Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, 15-17 décembre 1989*, ed. by Jean Dérens, Jean Dufournet and Michael Freeman (Paris: Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, 1993), pp. 9-25 (p. 13).
[279] Dyer, p. 274.
[280] Dyer, pp. 274-5.

are literary, and not filmic texts, we cannot quite enjoy the splendid visual image that Dyer evokes, but we can clearly see that the 'proliferation of phallic symbols' is apparent in Villon's work. He is struggling to wield the power of the phallus and regain his status as a phallocrat. However, yet again, we must ask why. Why does Villon need such phallic strength?

The answer comes when we look at the relationship between Villon and the women in the *Testament*. It is clear that his masculinity in particular is under siege and he wants to put himself amongst a long line of men who have been abused and subjugated by women. This pattern begins in the *Ballade des dames du temps jadis*. He evokes Esloÿs, whose relationship with Piere Esbaillart led to his castration and his becoming a monk. The issue of castration is of utmost importance in the pattern that I am creating through the texts and I will return to this later in the chapter. He then refers to the queen who had Buridan put in a sack and thrown into the Seine. After this, having spoken of many other people, the testator says, 'De moy, povre, je vueil parler' (line 657). This is an example of the insistent presence of the 'je' in the *Testament*. Whilst the text is polyphonic, presenting alternative voices such as Alexander and Diomedes, or the Belle Heaulmiere, the testator does not like to allow himself to be diverted for too long. He needs to talk about himself. There are various possibilities as to why the *Testament* was written, but it could certainly be suggested that Villon saw it as a cathartic experience and that he needs to allow his persona to speak in order to release his emotions. We then learn that:

> J'en fuz batu comme a ru telles,
> Tout nu, ja ne le quiers celler.

Qui me fist macher ces groselles,

Fors Katherine de Vausselles ? (657-661)

For reasons unknown, the testator was beaten naked because of Katherine de Vausselles. It is highly unlikely that she carried out this punishment personally, but ordered it done. It may well link to the description of corporal punishment that Villon mentions in the 'verset'. It should be emphasised that the construction of line 658 emphasises Villon's nakedness. Furthermore, in the conclusion to the Testament, we are told that when he died, he 'n'avoit q'un haillon' (line 2013). Depending on how this is read, it could be suggested that he was so poor, he had only rags, or that he was naked. Interestingly, Fein notes that 'nudity and poverty ... were also linked on a linguistic level in the time of Villon, one of the meanings of *povre* being "stripped", one of the meanings of *poverté* being "private parts"'.[281] If we take the latter reading, that he was naked, there is a distinct correlation between nakedness and vulnerability. He is beaten naked, and he dies naked, suggesting a negative association with nakedness and women. Vitz takes a different approach to this idea. She argues that it is an 'awareness of the fundamental nakedness of the human being, of the terrible vulnerability to the ravages of time and pain, which we all share, despite the differences in our superficial trappings'.[282] This appears a less than compelling interpretation. She goes on to propose that nakedness 'also suggests perhaps the fall of man'.[283] The use of 'perhaps' as a qualifier is important as it suggests that Vitz is not certain in this suggestion. Whilst there is a link to being naked in prelapsarian times and then clothing oneself with a fig leaf following the Fall, I do not think that we can see this aspect in Villon's poetry. It is much more a case of nakedness linking to the

[281] Fein, 1984, p. 22.
[282] Vitz, p. 78.
[283] Vitz, p. 78.

power of female sexuality. For example, in the *Ballade a s'amye*, the testator discusses how he was deceived and mistreated by a woman. In the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot*, we see that it is Margot who controls the testator. She climbs on top of him and tells him what to do. She may be a prostitute to his pimp, but where the pimp would usually dominate and control, he is merely the string to Margot's bow. The testator is clearly portraying himself as a victim of women.

However, the hierarchical structure of medieval society should not, in theory, permit this. As a gender-structured society, the male was seen as the dominant force, the ruler of the home. Women were very much in a subjugated role and viewed as second-class citizens. However, as I have just outlined, the women in Villon's texts are powerful, much more so than the men. They are attacking his masculinity and, in order to defend himself, he must seek out the phallus, as possessing the phallus will enable him to possess its power. Vitz notes that the testamentary form itself implies power, but points out that, 'for Villon to try to wield this power is an admission of and an attempt to compensate for his (or any man's?) real weakness'.[284] Since the *Lais* were called a will against Villon's wishes, we can see that using the testamentary form itself is not enough. He needs to actively search for phallic power. At this stage, it should be noted that in the *Testament*, Villon is not seen in a domestic situation, except on the one occasion when he is in the brothel with la Grosse Margot. Therefore, his relationship with women is not the same as a husband and wife relationship. Nevertheless, the male of the period would still be expected to be dominant. He would woo, he would not be wooed himself. On further examination of other contemporary texts, we see that this reversal of gender roles is more common

[284] Vitz, p. 86.

than it first appears. Let us take *nouvelle* 38 of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*. It is the story of a merchant who buys a lamprey and takes it for home for his wife to cook so he can have it at a dinner for male friends. However, upon seeing the lamprey, the wife decides to send it to her lover and, when the husband arrives with his friends, asking for the lamprey, she denies all knowledge of it, saying that her husband must have been mistaken. In a fury, the husband attempts to beat her, but is prevented from doing so by his friends. Knowing that her husband will beat her later, the wife manages to get her neighbour to take her place in the bed. Her husband gives the woman a vicious beating, but when he next sees his wife, she is untouched. She is then able to persuade him that nothing went on, making the bemused husband apologise.

The lamprey, 'belle et grosse',[285] becomes a gustatory metaphor with clear phallic connotations. Therefore, the person that possesses the lamprey possesses the phallus. The woman, by taking charge of the lamprey, becomes a phallic woman and takes control of the domestic sphere. When the lamprey is sent away to the wife's lover, the husband has lost all of his power and is effectively castrated. In an attempt to reassert his masculinity and conjugal dominance, he decides to beat his wife and the tool that he uses for it is especially interesting – it is a 'verge de boul'.[286] As well as a birch switch, David Fein points out that 'the word is often vulgarly used, both in fifteenth-century and modern usage, as a term designating the phallus'.[287] The use of the switch also parallels the use of the 'baston' in the farces of this period in both physical and metaphorical terms. Take, for example, the farce known as *Le Chaudronnier*.[288] As

[285] *CNn*, p. 261.
[286] *CNn*, p. 264.
[287] Fein, 2003, p. 83.
[288] *Farces du Moyen Age*, ed. by André Tissier (Paris: Flammarion, 1984), pp. 59-77.

the husband argues with his wife, he picks up the 'baston' and tells that 'je vous feray parler plus bas'.[289] It is patent that in all of these cases, the husband is seeking the phallus in order to reassert his patriarchal primacy. However, in *nouvelle* 38, since he has not actually beaten his wife after all, this attempt to regain his masculinity is doomed to failure. Fein also correctly notes that 'when he loses the dispute with his wife, he simultaneously loses the respect of the very men he had hoped to impress'.[290] The husband was using the lamprey to validate his position in a masculine society and reinforce its homosocial bonds. However, since he was actually prevented from beating his wife in the first place by his male friends, it is apparent that he is never going to be able to take refuge from his cunning wife in a world of male camaraderie. The issue of homosociality is of utmost importance in these texts.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick applies the term 'male homosocial desire' to 'such activities as "male bonding", which may ... be characterized by intense homophobia'.[291] It can therefore apply to groups such as male politicians, soldiers, business partners and athletes. Homosociality is a key part of patriarchy, which Heidi Hartmann defines as a 'set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women'.[292] The lamprey is the only way that the husband can integrate himself into male society and enjoy its solidarity. With the lamprey gone, there is no opportunity for the husband to do this and he is left as a fringe character, looking in on this world from the outside. He cannot belong in male-dominated society due to his feminized role within the home and is thus marginalized in both the

[289] *Farces*, p. 64, line 37.
[290] Fein, 2003, p. 84.
[291] Kosofsky Sedgwick, p. 1.
[292] Hartmann, p.14.

public and private spheres. However, there is one possible opportunity for the redemption of the male in this story. As in Villon's *Lais*, which I will examine later in this chapter, there is an emphasis on dreaming. The wife tells the husband that she has been dreaming and suggests that the same has happened to him. Is this *nouvelle* then nothing more than a fantasy, a link directly into the unconscious in which the man dreads women's empowerment and his rejection from male society? This would be an interesting reading, given the importance placed on the unconscious mind by Freud. He argued that the mind is divided into three parts: id, ego and super-ego. The id 'contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, that is fixed in the constitution – above all therefore the instincts'.[293] Any activity in the id takes place wholly unconsciously and in dreams, as Kline puts it, 'the id material ... is closer to the surface, [so] by dream analysis it is possible to learn and understand the workings of the unconscious mind'.[294] Thus, the idea of the male dreaming suggests that his unconscious mind is anxious about the power that the woman is gaining.

Homosociality will appear repeatedly in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* and before we can look at it in any of the other stories, we must look at the people who wrote them. They were written by men, for men. The ducal court of Philippe le Bon was a patriarchal, phallocentric society and therefore, the tales being told were those that men would want to hear, which is why there is such thematic emphasis on the bawdy, the sexual and the humorous, for example. Luca Pierdominici reminds us, however, that 'il n'est pas raison de croire que ces histoires égrillardes ne fussent pas destinées aussi à un public féminin'.[295] Later, he goes on to emphasise 'l'esprit du destinataire

[293] Sigmund Freud, quoted in Paul Kline, *Fact and Fantasy in Freudian Theory* (Methuen: London, 1972), p. 126.
[294] Kline, p. 127.
[295] Pierdominici, p. 79.

de l'ouvrage et de son milieu',[296] pointing out the large sexual appetite of Philippe le Bon, but does not discuss how they would reach a female audience, given the fact that the ducal court was a homosocial environment. However, David LaGuardia's statement that 'a gentleman had to master the art of telling a specific story about women in order to circulate in the network of relations of a male-dominated social hierarchy'[297] is baseless. The majority of stories in this compendium do discuss the power of men over women, but many of the stories contain the idea of the woman getting the upper hand, such as *nouvelle* 38, examined above. In *nouvelle* 99, for example, the husband manages to maintain control and his wife does not commit adultery, but this story is much less satisfying than those in which expectations are subverted. Undoubtedly, with this being a 'male-dominated social hierarchy', the idea of women taking over ought to be repugnant, heavily undermining LaGuardia's argument. However, there is no denying the importance of male bonding in the *CNn* and we will see this again in *nouvelle* 33. A lord and a knight have been having a relationship with the same woman, although both are unaware of it. After having proved that the woman has been unfaithful, 'la conclusion fut telle toutesfoiz qu'ilz ne l'abandonneroient point, mais par accord doresenavant chacun a son tour ira'.[298] The story concludes with the passage, 'mesmes firent de tres bons rondeaulx, et pluseurs chansonettes, qu'ilz manderent et envoyerent l'un a l'autre'.[299] LaGuardia writes that 'transactions of the female body invariably establish a bond between two or more men'.[300] In this story, the girl cuts off her hair and gives it to the lord as a sign of her fidelity. The hair then represents the female body by metonymy, and this transaction would seem to support LaGuardia's comments. Contrary perhaps to expectations, the

[296] Pierdominici, p. 84.
[297] LaGuardia, p. 57.
[298] *CNn*, p. 240.
[299] *CNn*, p. 240.
[300] LaGuardia, p. 59.

men value their homosocial bonds more than they do a sexual relationship with a woman. Kosofsky Sedgwick points out an idea put forward by René Girard – 'the bond between rivals in an erotic triangle as being even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the lovers or the beloved'.[301] This *nouvelle* is a classic example of an erotic triangle and undoubtedly proves Girard's thesis. David Fein correctly states that 'the relationship with the woman, rather than exercising a divisive influence on the companions, has actually strengthened their bond, elevating their friendship to a new level'.[302]

However, there are other stories that do not support LaGuardia's thesis. *Nouvelle* 43 is another story that discusses transactions. A merchant returns home to find his wife in bed with another man. He threatens death, but the wife's companion offers him grain to make amends. The wife then gets involved in the bargaining, offering her husband even more grain, but only if her companion is allowed to finish sleeping with her. After more discussion, the husband agrees to receive twelve measures of grain and let the other man finish. LaGuardia's argument regarding transactions of the female body runs into difficulty here. On the one hand, a relationship has been established, but it is only one of buyer and seller. The type of homosocial bonds that we expect from Kosofsky Sedgwick's definition are those of camaraderie and general enjoyment of male company, so whilst LaGuardia may be technically correct, his statement is on the very boundary of the homosocial. He then goes on to state that 'a social relation between two males [which] is not necessarily a substitute for the satisfaction of a repressed homosexual desire'.[303] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick states that there is a

[301] Kosofsky Sedgwick, p. 21.
[302] Fein, 2003, p. 65.
[303] LaGuardia, p. 59.

'diacritical opposition between the "homosocial" and the "homosexual"'.[304] Therefore, according to this theory, the heterocentric and patriarchal court cannot function if it is threatened by the danger of a homosexual masculinity. Therefore, there can be no question of imposing a homosexual reading on the *nouvelles*, despite the elements of scatology that appear in the stories, such as tale 11, where a ring is inserted into the anus.

As we can see, for the men who made up the court of Philippe le Bon, homosociality was important. It is also the case for Villon. The recipients of his bequests are mainly males. There are references to prostitutes, to his mother, to the Virgin Mary and others, but they are very much in a minority role. Therefore, the *Testament* can also be seen to belong to homosocial discourse. Villon is an outsider and a person who suffered various hardships throughout the course of his life. We know from judicial documents, police records and the like that he was imprisoned on several occasions. It has also been alleged that he was a member of the criminal underworld, and, more particularly, of a gang known as the Coquillards.[305] However, he was betrayed by his fellow criminals (admittedly, under torture) regarding the robbery of the Collège de Navarre. As I have already stated, we must differentiate between the historical Villon and his poetic persona, but it is highly likely that in real life, his presence in male company was sporadic. If he did suffer in his life as a result of failed relationships with women, as the testator would have us believe, an attempt to validate the bonds of male society through writing a piece of homosocial discourse is in fact highly plausible. There is, however, a psychoanalytic aspect to Villon's naming of his legatees. Villon, as a criminal, had the status of a marginal person on the borders of

[304] Kosofsky Sedgwick, p. 2.
[305] Jean Deroy, *François Villon coquillard et auteur dramatique* (Paris: Nizet, 1977).

society. This reaches its culmination in his eventual exile from Paris, where he becomes, we assume, a refugee. In the *Testament*, with his satirical and vituperative bequests, Villon never attacks anyone with lower social status than him. He is the poorest of the poor, the weakest of the weak. No-one can have suffered more than him. His targets are influential, powerful figures, such as Thibault d'Aussigny or Pierre Bobignon. Cholakian, quoting Daniel Lawrence O' Keefe, states that 'the power to name has often been considered a way to subjugate the Other'.[306] Therefore, by naming these people, Villon is symbolically defeating them and elevating himself to a higher status, just as drinking the wine representing Hervé Morillon in the *ballade de conclusion* symbolically enables Villon to overcome the Church that oppressed him so harshly. Cholakian, looking at the bequest to Francoys de la Vacquerie, states that 'the poet must have derived much pleasure from deflating and reducing this powerful personage to a pretext for text'.[307]

Blakeslee notes that, in the *Testament*, one of the key Freudian concepts is 'haine et révolte à l'égard des figures masculines d'autorité'.[308] However, he never actually uses the term 'Oedipus complex', writing only that 'le désir que le poète éprouve pour les femmes cache un désir d'union charnelle avec la mère'.[309] The Oedipus complex can be simply defined through the idea that the boy loves his mother and hates his father, because of sexual jealousy. Freud states that in the child, 'his early awakened masculinity makes him seek to assume, in relation to [the mother], the place belonging to his father ... His father now becomes a rival who stands in his way and

[306] Cholakian, p. 226.
[307] Cholakian, p. 222.
[308] Blakeslee, p. 1.
[309] Blakeslee, p. 4.

whom he would like to push aside'.[310] Blakeslee points out that various figures named in the *Testament* personify authority. He writes that Villon 's'en prend à son persécuteur, Thibaut d'Aussigny, et, à travers lui, à l'autorité épiscopale; à Perrenet Marchand et à l'autorité judiciaire; aux "riches paillarts" (T 422) et à l'autorité financière; aux ordres religieux et à l'autorité monacale'.[311] All of these figures are patriarchal and powerful. They dominate Villon, and Blakeslee sees them as 'doubles du père détesté'.[312] However, at this point, my analysis differs from that of Blakeslee. Whilst it is true that the *Testament* contains many powerful, masculine figures, the society of the period, as stated above, was a phallocracy. Every authority figure was male and it would have been unthinkable for a woman to command a powerful role such as that of Perrenet Marchand. To see these figures as representative of the father seems an overly facile reading, based on scant textual evidence. We know little of Villon's father, except that he is dead (line 300). Blakeslee then seems to change his mind, arguing that 'les doubles du père bienfaisant avec qui le poète cherche à se réconcilier sont encore plus nombreux'.[313] He notes Villon's evocation of Guillaume de Villon, his 'plus que pere', as well as Louis XI, who freed him from prison. Whilst this is an interesting reading, it seems that Blakeslee is trying to have two conflicting interpretations at the same time. It is true that the *Testament* is an ambiguous and contradictory piece of literature, yet this clash of figures, loved and hated, seems to argue for a distinct split personality in the testator. The connection between Guillaume de Villon and Louis XI has also been commented upon by Mühlethaler, who writes that 'le comparative ... est la marque d'un *trop* de louange qui ... nous paraît l'ironie du propos: Villon dénoncerait-il les penchants homosexuels, voire

[310] Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 57.
[311] Blakeslee, p. 6.
[312] Blakeslee, p. 2.
[313] Blakeslee, p. 6.

pédophiles, de ce soi-disant protecteur?'[314] This is, at best, a tenuous argument. Whilst the reference to Louis XI seems slightly hyperbolic and blandiloquent, to argue that Guillaume de Villon is a paedophilic predator is bizarre and lacking in textual evidence. Cholakian, in a much more persuasive argument, suggests that 'to identify the father is to name oneself' and that 'name and genesis linked guarantee birth rights and legitimate selfhood'.[315] For a marginal person such as Villon, being able to identify himself through birth would have been compelling, given his status on the edge of society. It is another way of gaining access to the reassuring culture of homosociality.

Another example of Villon's desire to belong in male-dominated society is demonstrated in his *ballade des pendus*. It speaks from the point of view of hanged men. As they hang from the gallows, their corpses twisting in the wind, they speak out and address the people looking at them, referring to them as 'freres humains'. The refrain of the ballade asks that God absolve 'tous nous', thus associating the hanged men with the general public, i.e. pointing out that the gap between the criminals and those who abide by the law is not that big. Furthermore, this association suggests that everyone needs to be absolved from sin, pointing out that the 'pendus' are expiating on behalf of everyone. In this reading, they could be viewed as analogous to Christ dying on the cross, though in a subversive way, as these figures are not particularly Christ-like. Of course, when Christ was crucified, two thieves were also executed along with him, so these could parallel some of the 'pendus'. Moreover, line 29 is distinctly ambiguous. They urge people: 'ne soiez donc de nostre confrairie'. On the surface, this would appear to be a warning for people not to follow their example and

[314] Mühlethaler, p. 235.
[315] Cholakian, p. 222.

become criminals, but to remain on the right side of the law. However, it could also be read that they are telling people to make sure that they are not caught. Whichever way we read this particular line, the insistent use of 'nous' points out that both the watchers and the dead people, as well as the poet and his reader, are all humans together. Villon's serious poem seems to be calling out for male solidarity and working together. We notice that he does not address women in any way in this poem; he evokes the 'freres humains', emphasizing the male aspect, and furthermore, the word 'confrairie' means 'brotherhood'. The hanged men need the help of their fellow men, when they are alive as well as when they are dead.

Luca Pierdominici briefly discusses the visual aspect of the *Testament* in terms of Villon's descriptions. He writes that 'on s'aperçoit que la qualité visuelle des images de Villon évolue souvent en direction du 'visionnaire', et qu'il s'attarde à décrire mais aussi à évoquer des images oniriques, voire cauchemardesques'.[316] This reference to the realm of dreams is interesting for my study, which uses Freudian theory. Freud put a lot of stock in the idea of the power of dreams. He states that 'the study of dream-work affords us an excellent example of the way in which unconscious material from the id forces itself upon the ego'[317] and that the 'interpretation of dreams is in fact the royal road to the knowledge of the unconscious'.[318] In other words, it is 'an example of the unconscious working-over of preconscious mental processes, i.e. an example of primary processes at work'.[319] In the *Lais*, the poet wakes, having fallen asleep. Blakeslee states that this 'suggère la possibilité d'un contact direct avec l'inconscient

[316] Pierdominici, p. 204.
[317] Freud, quoted in Kline, p. 204.
[318] Freud, quoted in Kline, p. 207.
[319] Kline, p. 204.

de Villon'.[320] However, he then makes a fatal flaw, by going on to say that, 'le *Lais* et le *Testament* s'inscrivent ainsi sous le signe de l'onirique, garant supplémentaire de leur vérité psychologique'.[321] As we know, the *Lais* and the *Testament* were not written at the same time. We know from the textual evidence in the *Testament* that the *Lais* appeared before the *Testament*, since in stanza LXXV, Villon criticizes those who called it a will without his consent. I can accept Blakeslee's argument that the *Lais* are associated with dreaming, since we have the idea of the poet falling asleep and then waking at the end. Yet, since the *Testament* was not written at the same time, it cannot be associated with the poet being asleep and writing the entire work at once. Were this scene to come at the end of the *Testament*, Blakeslee's statement would have more merit, but as it does not, his assertion cannot be accepted.

In stanza XXXVIII of the *Lais*, the narrator tells us that 'le sensitif s'esveilla'. Mus reads this as a reference to the narrator having an erection. 'Toute cette vision, donc, peut être considérée comme une fantaisie érotique, où Villon perd conscience dans une espèce d'orgasme',[322] he writes. Walter Blue agrees with this, stating that 'Villon's muddlement ends in physical masturbation, an act of deliberately flaunted sterile sex perhaps understandable in one thwarted by a mistress'.[323] In the next stanza, Villon refers to 'cierge', 'ancre' and 'feu', all of which are sexual symbols, according to Mus. He claims that 'son acte sexuel est achevé, et il n'en peut plus'.[324] This is an innovative and particularly interesting reading of the *Lais* and one that certainly has some potential. The story of the *Lais* is usually that, having suffered at the hands of a mistress, Villon leaves Paris to go to Angers and 'planter [...] autres

[320] Blakeslee, p. 2.
[321] Blakeslee, p. 3.
[322] Mus, p. 120.
[323] cf. p. 59.
[324] Mus, p. 120.

complans/Et frapper en ung aultre coing' (lines 31-32). These lines have the erotic connotation of the poet seeking his sexual pleasure in another location and belong to the semantic field of agriculture and minting money. This relates to the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, where locutions for the sexual act are often taken from professions. For example, in the fourth *nouvelle*, we see 'l'amoureux enferrée' and in the 85th, 'marteler sur enclume féminine',[325] both linked to the semantic field of ironwork.

However, using the Stockholm manuscript,[326] Mühlethaler changes the line 'je m'en vois a Angers', one of the most famous lines in the *Lais*, to 'je m'en vois a dangiers'.[327] There are various interpretations of Villon's trip to Angers, which some critics claim happened in order for Villon to get away from judicial recriminations following the robbery at the Collège de Navarre. Mus, however, has argued that this was simply the opportunity for another pun on 'ongier', meaning 'foutre'.[328] Mühlethaler's reading calls into the question Mus's interpretation, yet Mühlethaler goes against the majority of modern editions, the entirety of which employ the reading of 'Angers'. I am inclined to discount Mühlethaler's emendation, since it seems an unnecessary change to the text. It is not as though we are dealing with a lacuna where text has been inserted by guesswork, but a very established idea.

Whilst the idea of the *Lais* being written in a dreamlike state, similar to the Surrealist idea of automatic writing and the Spiritualist idea of written messages being conveyed

---

[325] *CNn*, p. 51 and p. 494 respectively.
[326] Stockholm, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. V.u.22. Facsimile: *Le Petit et le Grant Testament de Francoys Villon, les cinq ballades en jargon et des poèmes du cercle de Villon, etc.: Reproduction en fac-similé du manuscrit de Stockholm,* intro. by M. Schwob (Paris: Champion, 1905).
[327] cf. p. 13.
[328] Mus, p. 109.

through mediums in trances, is interesting, it is sadly implausible. For a poet in a trance to be able to write so many careful, octosyllabic *huitains* would be truly impressive. The idea of it being an erotic fantasy is also less than compelling. There are certainly erotic elements, but some of the ideas just do not add up. In the final stanza of the *Lais*, Villon describes himself as 'sec et noir comme (ung) escouvillon', which Barbara Sargent-Baur translates as 'thin and black like an oven-mop'.[329] Mus asserts that this is a euphemism for the penis.[330] His example is taken from Coquillart, from a passage in which women brandish various phallic symbols. Whilst I can accept 'escouvillon' as a phallic symbol in Coquillart's text, I fail to see why it should have that meaning here. A penis may be thin, yes. However, why should Villon's penis be black? It seems much more likely that Villon is describing his premature aging, as we see in the *Testament*. An old, withered person, he has been made thin and blackened by his difficult life and I see no need to add a sexual reading to this passage.

The world of dreams brings us to another important Freudian idea that can be seen in the *Testament*: 'hantise (terreur et fascination) de la mort', according to Merritt R. Blakeslee.[331] There are certainly numerous references to death and dying throughout Villon's work and the testator himself is clearly worried about it. This gives us an interesting representation of the male figure. Even though he is marginalized, without responsibilities and bitter at the way that he has been treated by the world, the idea of death is still worrisome for him. At one stage, he asks:

> Morrai ge pas? Oy, se Dieu plaist!
>
> Mais que j'aye fait mes estr[a]ines,

[329] Sargent-Baur, p. 41.
[330] Mus, p. 123 and note, p. 136.
[331] Blakeslee, p. 1.

Honneste mort ne me desplaist. (lines 418-420)

He is keen to emphasise the theme of death as the leveller and lines 224 ('car a la mort tout assouvit'), 375 ('Il n'est qui contre mort resiste') and 423 ('Tous sommes soubz mortel coustel') are all examples of this. The most notable, however, is stanza XXXIX, a philosophical speech about death, which I will examine in depth in order to better elucidate this idea.[332] It begins with the testator stating 'Je congnois que'. This is an example of *confessio,* allowing the author a dialogue with his audience. He then uses a long list of antithetical pairs and it is only in the last line of the stanza that he concludes his sentence, saying 'Mort saisit sans excepcïon'. His enumeration of people has a cumulative effect, allowing the sudden ending of the stanza to be even more shocking, particularly since the expected grammatical subject is revealed to be a direct object. Here, Villon is evoking the *Danse Macabré*, an illustrated poem in which the figure of Death dances with a member of every social class, in a progression from a Pope to a poor old man. Villon would have known the *Danse Macabré* well, since a text and pictures of it were painted on the walls of the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents in Paris. In the *Testament*, the characters are not representative of social classes, but are used as contrasts. 'Pouvres' and 'riches' are placed together, as are 'prestres' and 'laiz'. This enumeration lasts for seven lines, with the pace seeming to increase after each line, just as it would in a real dance. In line 312, the rising pace is cut off sharply as the dance reaches its climax. Villon uses the proverbial locution 'Mort saisit sans excepcïon', personifying death, just as in the *Danse Macabré*. Furthermore, the verb 'saisir' is a strong, harsh verb, suggesting an omnipotent force from which there can be no escape. Hunt states that this is part of

[332] Note that in Mühlethaler's edition, this stanza is given in square brackets, as it is present only in manuscript F (Stockholm, V.u.22).

'the undermining of individual authority'.[333] As already stated in this chapter, there are numerous examples of Villon versus authority and what better way to challenge it than to show that everyone loses their power in the end? Whatever shames and humiliations Thibault d'Aussigny may have inflicted upon him, or whatever hatred he may have felt for his father, the power that they hold will diminish to nothing at their death.

Having made this speech, in the next stanza the testator now considers the actual act of dying, describing it in grim anatomical terms and heightening the effect through the rhyme scheme. He first evokes the deaths of Paris and Elayne, who are infamous for having caused the Trojan War and who 'epitomize disastrous romantic passion'.[334] This passage is usually taken to be the start of the theme of the 'martyrs for love', which culminates at the end of the *Testament* with Villon's own death as a martyr from an arrow wound (lines 2001 and 2015), just as Paris died. Evelyn Birge Vitz provides a different perspective, stating that Paris and Helen would normally be associated with 'more symbolic forms of death, the courtly or sexual'.[335] It is undeniable that in literature, sex and death are related. The idea of masturbation as a form of death due to the wasting of sperm is common in poetry of the medieval period. Semen is a syllogism. If it produces life, it is life itself. Therefore, orgasm means that the male is dying, hence its being called 'la petite mort' in French. Of course, it must be pointed out that this term was only coined in the twentieth century by the writer Georges Bataille.[336] Nevertheless, despite this evidence, Vitz's interpretation of the passage as having a sexual implication seems unlikely. Villon's

[333] Hunt, 1996, p. 93.
[334] Freeman, p. 154.
[335] Vitz, p. 42.
[336] See his novel, *Madame Edwarda* (Paris: J. J. Pauvert, 1956).

description is sharp and far from romantic, and rather than sexual symbols, Paris and Helen are the epitome of doomed lovers, or, for Claude Thiry, 'symboles de jeunesse, de beauté, d'amour'.[337] In a footnote, Vitz then goes on to add, 'In English, "to die", meant quite specifically 'to die in intercourse'',[338] but quite inexplicably fails to elaborate any further on this somewhat intriguing assertion. Keith Whinnom, in a discussion of fifteenth-century Spanish *cancionero* poetry, draws our attention to a quotation from Shakespeare, which would support Vitz's statement. In *King Lear*, IV, 6, we see 'I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom'.[339] The sexual allusions here are obvious. As with the reference to 'spitting white' earlier in this chapter, we must note that Shakespeare was writing over a century after Villon, but it is entirely possible that the image has its roots in pre-Shakespearian language. Whinnom also locates similar sexual allusions in Italian madrigals and Latin poetry. We can also see suggestions of it in the poetry of Garcilaso de la Vega, a Spaniard writing in the very early sixteenth century. One of his most intriguing sonnets concludes:

> Por vos nací, por vos tengo la vida,
> Por vos he de morir, y por vos muero.[340]

We can translate this as:

> I was born for you; I have life because of you,
> I shall die for you, and I die for you.

---

[337] Thiry, p. 116.
[338] Vitz, p. 42.
[339] Keith Whinnom, *La poesía amatoria de la época de los Reyes Católicos* (Durham: University of Durham, Durham Modern Languages Series, 1981), p. 35 and note, p. 99.
[340] Garcilaso de la Vega, *Poesías castellanas completas*, ed. by Elias L. Rivers (Madrid: Castalia, 1996). The reference is to sonnet V, lines 13-14.

This association between life and death clearly puts the passage into a sexual sphere. Therefore, we cannot deny this as a possible reading, but it seems unconvincing.

In line 314, we are told 'Quicunques meurt, meurt a douleur'. The chiasmus emphasising 'meurt a douleur' suggests that nobody can die peacefully in their bed, there has to be some form of suffering involved. The passage has been referring to lovers and what happens to those who love – essentially, they die. From this, we can extrapolate that, if death is suffering, suffering is love. Whenever Villon refers to love, there is some form of suffering involved. We must also note the use of the word 'quicunques', allowing the act of dying to refer to anyone. For one of the few occasions in the entire work, the omnipresent and solipsistic 'je' of the narrator is replaced by the universal 'quicunques', showing that death is not going to happen to just one man, but to every man. This emphasises what Blakeslee sees as a fear of death. It is important enough that Villon is able to refer to everyone, other than just himself and his graphic representation of the body, be it male or female, in its death throes stands as a warning for everyone.

In this chapter, I have examined various representations of the male body. We have seen explicit references, as well as allusions through metaphor and imagery. We can suggest various reasons for the employment of metaphor, such as the idea of the author being a master of verbal games. Furthermore, Cristina Azuela suggests that 'il s'agit de dévoiler la joie de l'écrivain qui manipule les mots à son plaisir'.[341] If we take the idea of Villon manipulating the names of his legatees, this is an entirely plausible idea. Moreover, the application of psychoanalytic theories to Villon's work

[341] Azuela, p. 46.

has raised some very interesting ideas. Preoccupation with death is a patent theme, giving us insight into the psyche of the testator and the mindset of the fifteenth century. Looking at a panorama of fifteenth-century works of literature, we have seen a patriarchy where the usual male hegemony is under threat from women who are not as powerless and marginalized as may have been thought. Woman's power appears to be on the rise and I will discuss her role, ideas and interaction with other females in my next chapter.

Chapter 3: Representations of the Female in selected Fifteenth-century Texts

In the previous chapter, I discussed the representation of the male in my selected fifteenth-century texts and showed that there was a distinct bias towards the homosocial as regards Villon's legatees. However, I also demonstrated that Villon's *Testament* does not exclude women entirely. In fact, they play a key role as they besiege and threaten the masculinity of the testator. This chapter will work through the *Testament* sequentially, analyzing each different representation of the female before using concepts derived from gender studies and psychoanalysis to show how the female is represented, both consciously and subconsciously, in Villon's work, before expanding to discuss the role of the woman in other texts, such as the *Quinze Joyes de mariage*. Given that all of the selected texts are written by, or are believed to have been written by men, there is an element of partiality involved here. However, whilst we might imagine the texts to demonstrate and celebrate the dominance of the male over the subordinate female, these preconceived notions are swiftly turned upon their head.

Let us begin with an analysis of the *Testament*. Before Villon commences his bequests and his will proper, he discusses his life and introduces the 'ubi sunt' theme that is so important to the first part of the *Testament*. This topos, or literary convention, was very significant in medieval thinking and was associated with the idea of 'carpe diem', or, 'seize the moment'. Villon's powerful ballade, the *Ballade des dames du temps jadis*, explores this theme. He evokes famous women of the past and of mythology, such as Joan of Arc and Echo, as well as some lesser known ones, such as Haranburgis. The refrain ending each line of the ballade, 'Mais ou sont les

neiges d'anten', shows that everything changes and everyone will die in the end. The characters he evokes were powerful, but their power ended with their death, also introducing the motif of death as the leveller, or equality through death. With this theme introduced, in stanza XLVII, the testator's voice gives way for the first time to a woman called 'la belle qui fut hëaulmiere' (line 454), who was in fact, a real historical figure, the mistress of Nicholas d'Orgemont.[342] However, this said, the old woman who gives advice to younger people is a stock figure in literature, used by Ovid and then, in a more contemporary period to Villon, by Jean de Meun in the *Roman de la Rose*. In the latter text, she is called 'la Vieille' and gives a speech from which Villon has taken inspiration.[343]

The portrait painted of this woman is less than flattering, though the attention to detail and the realism of the description suggests that the somewhat unpleasant nature of the image is something that Villon wishes to emphasise. She is 'veille', and 'chenue' in line 486, as well as being 'povre, seiche, maigre' and 'menue' in line 491. In the following stanzas, she then proceeds to look at herself and each different part of her body, pointing out the changes in it as a result of the passage of time. Sargent-Baur notes that this is 'a fairly conventional enumeration, in normal descending order, of ideal, feminine beauty, according to the medieval canon',[344] reinforcing the idea that this topos was widespread in the Middle Ages. It is interesting, however, to note the metaphorical richness of some of the terms that the Belle Hëaulmiere employs:

[342] Sargent-Baur, p. 202. Sargent-Baur notes that as she was born around 1375, were she still alive in Villon's period, she would have been extremely old.
[343] See lines 12710-14516 of the *Roman de la Rose* for the full text of her speech.
[344] Sargent-Baur, p. 202.

Eslevees, propres et faictisses,

A tenir amoureuses lices,

Ces larges reins, ce sadinet

Assiz sur grosses fermes cuisses

Dedens son petit jardinet ? (504-8)

The word 'lices' evokes the semantic field of jousting, taking us back to the conceptual metaphor of SEX IS WAR, so common in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*. In *nouvelle* 86, for example, we find the metaphor 'bourdon joustouer' to refer to the penis.[345] 'Sadinet', the diminutive of 'sade', or 'pretty', is used here to describe the vagina, although it does not normally have a sexual meaning, whilst 'jardinet' is a metaphor for the mons veneris. Obviously, it also has the sense of 'small garden', therefore linking the human body with the world of nature and gardening. We will see this idea again later in the *Testament*, when I will develop it more thoroughly.

She then addresses the various 'filles de joie', or prostitutes, who work with her – Gaultiere, Blanche la Savetiere, la Saulcissiere, Guillemete la Tappiciere, Jehanneton la Chapperonniere and Katherine la Bourciere. She urges them to 'seize the moment'; warning them in the refrain that, soon, they will be as useless as 'monnoye qu'on descrye'. Sex is associated with money through this comparison, a reminder that the girls in question are prostitutes, and have a 'value', albeit for a limited time. We also note that she is telling her girls that it is time to act and to get as much as they can from men. In line 538, she urges 'N'espargniez homme', which further plays on the financial connotations of the passage, given that the verb 'espargnier' can mean 'to

[345] *CNn*, p. 501.

save'. In introducing this passage, Villon claims that he has simply overheard her complaining. This is not the most polished way to insert a passage, but it also serves as a reminder of Villon's position on the margins of society. He is on the outside, an isolated figure, and whilst he is able to see and hear things, he is powerless to do anything. The idea of the narrator as onlooker or voyeur is another common late medieval topos. Spearing notes that the very fact of watching 'implies an inability to perform'.[346] Villon is aware of the wiles of women, yet he still falls victim to them.

One of the most interesting lines given to the Belle Hëaulmiere is 545, when she tells the girl that soon she will have to 'clore fenestre'. As well as being a metaphor, this phrase gives a realistic image of a prostitute sitting in a shop window, hoping to lure passing trade into the brothel. As part of a building, the window links into the conceptual metaphor of THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING. Let us recap our knowledge of this metaphor. The two semantic fields involved in this metaphor are the building (source domain) and the body (target domain). By referring to the 'fenestre', Villon uses a precise part of the building to link into the larger THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING conceptual metaphor. Through this process of mapping of metaphors, what we know of windows ('fenestre') is transferred to the vulva, the target domain. The window is used to gain access to the building, just as the vulva is used to enter the body. This metaphor appears repeatedly in texts throughout the fifteenth-century. One of the best examples is in the *Sermon joyeux de saint Billouard,*[347] which could have been written just to exploit the linguistic potential of such a metaphor. In Middle French, 'billouart' had the meaning of 'penis', immediately associating it with other sexual, pseudo-religious sermons, such

[346] Spearing, p. 11.
[347] *Recueil de sermons joyeux*, pp. 105-32.

as the *Sermon joyeux de saint Jambon et de sainte Andouille*. It begins in Latin with the lines 'Introivit in tabernaculo,/Lacrimante recessit oculo', which Johnson translates as, 'He entered into the tabernacle, he withdrew with weeping eye'.[348] From the title and these opening lines, a reader would not need too much imagination to realise that the 'weeping eye' is in fact a penis, and that the tabernacle represents the female body. David Cowling points out that throughout the poem, 'human anatomy is transformed into a topography with architectural locations for male and female genitals'.[349] In line 123, the narrator asks how Billouard got into the tabernacle, wondering if it were a miracle, emphasising the religious idea. However, it turns out that it was a lot simpler than that, since 'la porte n'estoit point bien close' (line 125). We immediately see that the vagina is portrayed as a door, allowing him entry into the female body, the building. Later, Billouard, now called Billouardus and accompanied by two assistants, known as 'testiculos', arrives at the convent, where the porter 'n'avoit point bien clos le guycet' (line 158). 'Guycet' is clearly synonymous for 'porte'. It also has the same structural function in the metaphor, in that it is the point of access. The sermon then continues:

> Billouard, plus dur que buichet,
> Tout maulgré Maujoinct et ses dens,
> Se lancha bien radde dedens
> Tout seul, ses freres s'embarcquerent
> Contre l'huys ou beaucoup hurturent,
> Mais pourtant n'y entrerent point; (lines 159-164)

[348] Johnson, p. 244.
[349] Cowling, p. 43.

The erotic allusions are obvious. Billouard is now very hard, i.e. erect, and launches himself inside the building, or the woman. However, his two companions are unable to follow and are stuck outside, where they bang on the door, or strike against the vagina. As with 'guycet' and 'porte', 'huys' takes on a sexual connotation. The simple anatomical fact is also clear. Only the male member can enter the vagina, the testicles have to remain outside. It should be noted that in the *CNn,* we see the expression 'hurter a sa treille',[350] which has the same meaning as 'frapper à sa porte'. Doors and openings lend themselves particularly well to sexual connotations and interpretations.

One of the most interesting concepts in this metaphor is that the female body is portrayed as something to be protected, working in conjunction with the idea that female chastity is a sacred thing. Maujoinct, the doorkeeper, is there to protect the vagina. In my previous chapter, I discussed the use of military metaphors in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* to refer to the penis and we also see them used to describe the sexual act. For example, the woman is described as a 'forteresse' and the vagina is described as the 'donjon du chastel'.[351] The buildings have to be assaulted and besieged in order to gain entrance. This is not a new metaphor, since David Cowling notes that it was 'central to much thinking about the body in Antiquity'.[352] This appears again in the *Testament* in stanza CXX. The testator bequeaths 'une sallade et deux guisarmes' (line 1193) to frere Baude, so that his 'caige vert' is not stolen. The 'caige vert', a sign for a brothel, metonymically represents the priest's lover, since the 'caige' is a metaphor for the vagina. The fact that he is bequeathed a sallet and two halberds brings the stanza into the sexual sphere, as we again see the association

[350] *CNn*, p. 106.
[351] *CNn*, p. 197.
[352] Cowling, p. 27.

between the woman and military battle, particularly when the phallic nature of the halberd is taken into account.

After we see the passage related to the Belle Hëaulmiere, the next time we hear about women by name is when Villon discusses his possible love affair with Katherine de Vausselles. I explored this idea in my previous chapter, but it is necessary to make the point once again here that Villon is creating a very negative portrayal of women, telling a story of his having been abused, both by females and by Love. However, once he begins to testate, this changes. His very first bequest comes in stanza LXXXV, where he leaves his soul to the 'glorïeuse Trinité' and 'Nostre Dame' (834-5). In the following stanza, his actual body is bequeathed to 'nostre grant mere la terre' (842). These bequests highlight two things. Firstly, they show the emphasis of the period on the soul. There was immense preoccupation with the idea that people would be sent to Hell or Purgatory, and the issue of death was never far from the mind of the average fifteenth-century reader. By giving his soul to the Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity, Villon is following the conventions of the period and attempting to assure his place in Heaven, and not Hell. As we know from the rest of the *Testament*, as someone who portrays himself as a sinner ('je suis pecheur, je le sçay bien', he writes in line 105), just as much as he portrays himself as a saint, Villon was by no means assured of a place in Heaven. The language employed by the testator here is of a high register, using formal, religious language.

In stanza LXXXIX, Villon bequeaths a ballade to his 'povre mere' so that she can greet the Virgin Mary with it. The most interesting lines of this stanza are:

Autre chastel n'ay ne fort(e)resse

Ou me retraye corps në ame, (869-70)

Here, we again have the conceptual metaphor of THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING, with the semantic field of the castle. The testator is representing the Virgin Mary as a castle in which he can take shelter, or a refuge in religion, if you will. Usually, as I discussed above, there is a sexual connotation when the woman's body is portrayed as a building, but here, the sexual meaning can be discounted, as there is an anatomical meaning based on the Virgin's womb, with Villon is employing the traditional idea of the Virgin being a 'refugium peccatoris'.[353] This reference evokes the fifteenth-century depictions of the Virgin as a 'vierge ouvrante'. These were statues of a 'fetish-like Madonna whose belly opened to reveal the Trinity concealed within'.[354] Christ literally seeks refuge inside, just as the sinners can seek refuge in Mary. The role of Mary as intercessor was well known in the period, with stories such as the *Miracle of Theophilus*[355] being widespread.

The subsequent ballade is then put into the mouth of Villon's mother, who addresses the Virgin as 'Dame du ciel, regente terïenne' (line 873). Again, the poet's language is powerful and he uses an elevated register as he praises the Virgin. We also learn a little of Villon's mother, who is presented as a poor, old woman, who cannot read. It is interesting that such an elevated register is used, since due to the illiteracy of Villon's mother, it is unlikely that she would ever employ such language. As the ballade reaches its conclusion, it can be seen that 'APELLA CE VILLON' is written

[353] Mühlethaler, p. 236.
[354] Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and The Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Quartet, 1978), p. 47.
[355] See Warner, Chapter 21.

in an acrostic from lines 895-909, but it is also suggested that there is a feminization of the poet's name here, and it should be read as 'VILLONE'. Uitti states that 'he and his mother are conjoined in a special union ... refracting that of Christ and his mother'.[356] We have already seen in the previous chapter that there are various instances of 'imitatio Christi' in the text and this is an interesting reading. By linking his mother and Christ's mother, Villon is associating himself with Christ, as well as making himself part of the Holy Trinity. This is the first example of the use of an acrostic by the poet in this work, emphasising the primacy and importance that Villon places on his mother and the Virgin Mary. The pre-eminence of Villon's mother is a particularly significant idea, given the discussion of the evocation of the Oedipus complex within the *Testament* in the previous chapter. We noted Villon's dislike of authority figures, taking them as a representation of his father. Could, therefore, this symbolic coming together represent Villon's repressed sexual desire for his own mother, as Blakeslee claims? Given the exiguous evidence that we can find about her in the text, it is difficult to pursue this hypothesis any further, but it evokes the possibility of a Freudian reading. Blakeslee also believes that the mother, as she appears in the *Testament,* is nothing but a 'personnage de pure convention littéraire sans chair ni sang'.[357] He goes on to suggest that 'à la manière des enfants qui substituent à leurs vrais parents un père et une mère de fantaisie, le poète, orphelin volontaire, évoque la mort prochaine de sa mère chaque fois qu'il la mentionne'.[358] This statement is true, but it also appears to imply confusion on the part of Blakeslee. If, on the one hand, we are arguing for the desire for sexual union with the mother, then why should Villon be evoking her imminent death at the same time? We also note that, in line 851, he tells us that Guillaume de Villon has been 'plus doulx que

[356] Uitti, p. 156.
[357] Blakeslee, p. 5.
[358] Blakeslee, pp. 5-6.

mere' to him. Rather than referring specifically to his actual mother, this locution evokes the mother as a concept. Nevertheless, the fact that he pays Guillaume de Villon such a major compliment suggests some form of dissatisfaction with the role his own mother played. This, therefore, demonstrates some of the problems and contradictions in attempting to elaborate a unified reading of the concept of woman and Villon's relationship with the female sex in the *Testament.*

Stanza XCVII brings us the next woman who is a recipient of a bequest. She is the wife of Piere Saint Amant.[359] Before we study this huitain, we need to look at the reference to Sainct Amant in the *Lais.*[360] Villon writes:

> Item, je laisse a Sainct Amant
> Le *Cheval Blanc* avec *La Mule* (lines 89-90)

Then, in the *Testament*:

> Pour *Le Cheval Blanc* qui ne bouge
> Lui changay a une jument
> Et *La Mulle* a ung asne rouge. (lines 1011-1013)

The names italicized by modern editors are actually the names of tavern signs. Villon is using their name for an erotic joke and this 'marrying' of signs was common in the Paris of the time. Jean Dufournet has devoted an entire chapter to the study of this

[359] Spelling as given in the *Testament.*
[360] Despite the slight variation in spelling, these are generally assumed to be the same person.

stanza in his book,[361] so it is futile to repeat in depth what he has said, but it is well summarized by Jean-Claude Mühlethaler. He writes, 'en remplaçant le cheval par une jument, et la mule par un âne, Villon suggère une inversion (perversion?) des rôles des partenaires par un choix qui n'a rien d'innocent'.[362] Saint Amant's wife receives an ass to replace her impotent husband, whilst he gets a fertile mare.

After this bequest, Villon puts women to the side and moves through his satirical will, making jokes and attacking important male figures. Female figures do not return until we finally come to the *Ballade pour Robert d'Estouteville*, which is a further occasion for the testator to stand aside and allow another voice to speak from within the text. The ballade is put into Robert d'Estouteville's mouth and, in the acrostic, we can read AMBROISE DE LORÉ, the name of his wife. This is a most interesting ballade, as it seems out of place in the *Testament*. It has been speculated that it was actually written on another occasion and then added into the *Testament* later.[363] Its elevated register comes as a powerful contrast to other stanzas in the work, including the *Ballades des langues ennuyeuses*, which follows shortly after. This is because there is a distancing effect at work here. By putting the ballade into the mouth of someone else, Villon is able to move away from and deny responsibility for the ideas and feelings expressed in it. This striking ballade talks of the delights of love; delights that Villon has rejected elsewhere in his work.

Whereas, on other occasions, Villon has described the sexual act in an animalistic or base manner, here it is portrayed in elegant terms:

---

[361] Dufournet, 1980, pp. 77-88.
[362] Mühlethaler, p. 242.
[363] For more details, see Fein, 1984, p. 60.

... la graine que je sume

En vostre champs, quant le fruyt me ressemble.

Dieu m(e)'ordonne que le fouÿsse et fume,

Et c'est la fin pourquoy sommes ensemble. (1398-1401)

I have already examined the clash of register between the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot* and this piece, but it is interesting to note the vocabulary used to describe the woman. She is a 'champ', or 'field', to be fertilized, taking us into the semantic domain of agriculture.[364] Agricultural metaphors are also common in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*. Take, for example, *nouvelle* 80, which introduces a man whose member is not long enough. It is described as the 'baston de quoy on plante les hommes'.[365] Furthermore, in this ballade, sex is described as an activity with a purpose. It is not simply for pleasure, but to reproduce, to have offspring, or 'fruyt'.

The next woman mentioned is Madamoiselle de Bruyeres, or Catherine de Béthisy, in stanza CXLIV. She is known to have been a very religious woman and fond of giving sermons, hence Villon's gift for her to preach. He opens with the stanza in line 1507, with a pun on 'Bille', meaning both 'Bible' and 'bile'. He asks her to preach in the Marchié au Fillé, with the latter words being a further pun on 'filles'. He talks of the redemption of the 'villotieres' in line 1511. 'Villotieres', of course, is another word for 'filles de joie', or prostitutes. The testator then launches into the *Ballade des femmes de Paris*, discussing the various types of women and their abilities to talk, ending each stanza with the refrain, 'il n'est bon bec que de Paris'. It is implied that however good at preaching Catherine de Béthisy may be, she is going to find it very

[364] For discussion of 'champ', see the *Dictionnaire érotique*, p. 117 and for 'graine', p. 335.
[365] *CNn*, p. 471.

difficult to convert the people who live in that area to religion and redeem them from sin. Furthermore, the ironical comment that Parisian tongues are the best could certainly refer to the ways in which the testator was denounced, criticized and harangued by Parisian women.

Stanza CXLVII is a bequest to servants and chambermaids. The testator bequeaths them 'tartes, flans et goyeres' and points out that 'riens ne me nuyt'. Of course it does not matter to him, since he does not have these things to bequeath them! However, it could easily be imagined that someone who portrays himself as a poor man would quite like to have some tarts, flans and other such morsels of food. He then suggests that they take part in the 'jeu d'asne', which is a metaphor for sexual intercourse. This is a further example of the unpleasant ways in which sex could be described. We have previously seen it referred to as the 'beast with two backs', making an animalistic, carnal image, which this reference serves to reinforce. Interestingly, this does not appear to be a particularly popular metaphor, given that only one other example can be found, in the *Recueil de Galanteries*.[366] This metaphor is further proof that Villon sees sex only as a form of pleasure. In addition, we have already seen a reference to donkeys in line 1013, when Villon replaces a husband with an ass. Mühlethaler notes that 'pour le Moyen Âge, l'âne est un animal particulièrement lubrique'.[367] In addition, it is an example of his trying to exert power over other people. By making a will, he has some power, since he can give orders. Having presented himself as unable to have a proper relationship and having suffered in love, the testator is now trying to control the relationships of others.

[366] See the *Dlmf*, p. 448.
[367] Mühlethaler, p. 242.

In stanza CXLVIII, the testator refers to the 'filles de bien', to whom he can leave nothing, as 'tout ont eu varletz, servantes' and also, these girls have 'pere, merë, et antes' (lines 1570 and 1568). It is rare for a testator to leave nothing to someone mentioned in his will. Vitz makes the point that 'it is certainly not because he has nothing left – his penury has never kept him from giving a gift before! It is because they have *peres, meres et antes*'.[368] As seen in the previous chapter, the testator portrays himself as a marginalized figure, mistreated by women and lacking male friendship. His father is dead and he has no proper relationships. It could be argued from this stanza that he is showing a desire to fit in and be part of society. Cholakian argues that 'the female collectivization serves a depersonalizing purpose: it defines a primordial lack and original hurt'.[369]

Following this, we have the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot*, that powerful evocation of carnal desire. Since this was discussed in depth in the first chapter, I will not repeat it again here. Stanza CLI brings us to the bequests to Marïon l'Idolle and Jehanne de Bretaigne, two prostitutes. They are told to set up a 'publique escolle', i.e. a brothel, and the poet points out that this trade thrives everywhere, except in the prison at Meung. The use of the 'school' metaphor is worthy of note, as there are various references to education throughout the *Testament*. Given that the testator says that in this school, it is the pupil who teaches the master, it is very much an advantage to be young. At the beginning of the *Testament*, we see the line, 'je fuyoie l'escolle' and learn that the testator laments not having studied. To which type of school is he referring? It is also useful to note that in the *Jardin de plaisance*, schooling is again given an erotic context, where the phrase 'venir de l'escole' means 'to become adept

[368] Vitz, p. 57.
[369] Cholakian, p. 218.

in sexual matters'.[370] This is the last bequest to deal with women in the *Testament* and it is interesting that in this way, the work has followed a cyclical structure. The first key female in the text was the Belle Hëaulmiere, a prostitute, and the last reference to women is a reference to prostitutes also. It would appear that Villon is giving them a privileged place in his text.

Therefore, we see distinct types of women in Villon's *Testament*. We have the prostitutes, comprised of people such as la Grosse Margot and Jehanne de Bretaigne. The testator has a relationship, but only on a sexual level, with these women. We have women who have mistreated him, such as Denise and Katherine de Vausselles. The testator's relationship with these is antagonistic. We have his mother, the Virgin Mary and Ambroise de Loré, who are seen as ideal figures. However, they are all distant from him and unobtainable. The Virgin Mary is an iconic figure, Ambroise de Loré belongs to a world removed from Villon and even his mother is far from him, and, according to him, will soon be dead. It is therefore clear that the relationship between the testator and women is problematic. Blakeslee suggests that the female is 'aggressive [*sic*] et hostile, distante et désirable, répugnante et troublante'.[371] I argued in my previous chapter that Villon was seeking refuge from the power of women through homosociality. What we have seen in the *Testament* is a type of lesbian continuum. This concept was defined by Adrienne Rich, who saw it as a form of resistance to enforced heterosexuality and male hegemony, describing it as 'including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, [and] the giving and receiving of practical and political support'.[372]

---

[370] See the *Dictionnaire érotique*, p. 220.
[371] Blakeslee, p. 4.
[372] Rich, pp. 51-52. The emphasis is Rich's.

The problem with any definition of the lesbian continuum in a work told through a male first-person narrative is that there can be allegations of bias. Although the *Testament* is a polyphonic work, no-one is ever allowed to contradict the testator. He even anticipates possible objections and is prepared for them ('Et s'aucun me vouloit reprendre' in line 17, for example). Therefore, when he tells us that he was mistreated by women, we have to take his statement at face value and assume that it is true. In a work that is narrated in the third person, there is more scope for debate on this, as we are often allowed to see multiple viewpoints. Nevertheless, if we agree with the testator that he has suffered at the hands of women, we must ask how.

We know that he was beaten naked, we know that he plays the passive role when with la Grosse Margot and that he claims to have been deceived by other women, as well as complaining that Denise had untruthfully claimed that he cursed her. However, some critics believe that they have identified more frightening representations of the female in the *Testament*. Let us examine stanza XCV and the bequest to Le Cornu. The testator tells a story of an adventure that he has had in a house that he leased from Pierre Bobignon, but it was necessary to 'reffaire/L'uys' (lines 996-997). Here is another example of THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING. The 'uys' is a metaphor for the door, allowing the testator access into the woman's body. In the next stanza, the testator states that he lost a hoe handle and a paving stone there, 'par faulte d'un huys' (line 998).

He then goes on to say that, 'l'ostel est seur, mais qu'on le cloue' (line 1002). This parallels the *Sermon de Billouart*, where the phallic saint enters the convent because the door has not been closed properly. The testator finishes by claiming that he spent a

'sanglante nuyt' there (line 1005). However, rather than reading line 998 as the lack of the door, David Mus suggests that it was the fault of the door. Mus suggests that Villon 'y a perdu son membre', taking the possible phallic symbols in this passage into account.[373] Here, he is evoking the concept known as *penis captivus*, an interesting medical phenomenon. It occurs when the woman's vaginal muscles clamp down during intercourse, making the male unable to remove his penis, even when flaccid. There have been some suggestions that this is a fictional phenomenon and it remains a point of medical controversy.[374] If we take Mus's interpretation, though tenuous, we see that rather than this being merely a humorous story, there is an underlying psychological fear here. The idea of *penis captivus* links with the *vagina dentata*, a key part of psychoanalytic theory regarding castration anxiety. Fear of toothed vaginas can be traced back many centuries. It is common in medieval literature. In Spanish balladry, for example, there is the story of the 'serrana' or 'serranilla', a woman, a mountain witch, with a toothed vagina who lived in the hills.[375] These 'serranas' are linked to the idea of sirens, drawing the sailors to their deaths. In the *Jugement des cons*,[376] a *fabliau*, one of the sisters refers to her vagina growing teeth, and the other describes it as a 'goule baee' (line 150), continuing to use the metaphor of the mouth. Simon Gaunt see this as a text that is 'deeply misogynistic in its view of the female genitalia as a forbidding, threatening or insatiable mouth'.[377] The vagina is also described as the 'large bouche/De ton ventre fecond' in the

[373] Mus, p. 427.
[374] See Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Choking Doberman and Other "New" Urban Legends* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986).
[375] See Nancy F. Marino, *La serranilla española: notas para su historia e interpretación* (Potomac: Scripta Humanistica, 1987).
[376] Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard, *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, 10 vols (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983-98) IV (1988), 23-33.
[377] Gaunt, p. 241.

Facétieuses nuits, a work that appeared in 1550-55.[378] Furthermore, in the medieval period, the entrance into Hell was often portrayed as a gaping mouth and in some cases, this idea continues today, being popularized, for example, in the American drama *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Interestingly, the fear of the toothed vagina is known all over the world and is not limited to western cultures, demonstrating the underlying psychological fear behind it. Barbara Creed points out that, although Freud is commonly associated with the concept of the *vagina dentata*, he does not actually discuss it, as, 'in Freudian theory, castration is posed as a threat coming from the father'. She goes on to state that 'the mother's genitals terrify from a passive perspective'.[379] Whether or not Freud proposed this theory does not entirely matter, since it fits neatly into the idea of the terrifying nature of the woman, the idea of woman as castrator, due to the deep-seated castration anxiety of the male. The conception of the *vagina dentata* also relates to the idea of the conceptual metaphor, THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING, as it can be seen as a 'barred and dangerous entrance'.[380] The concept of the vagina as mouth is, of course, a different metaphor, but given that the mouth is an entrance to the body, there are distinct connections. Lederer points out that entering the vagina and breaking its teeth is 'the exact equivalent of the heroic journey into the underworld and the taming of the toothy hell-hound Cerberus by Herakles'.[381] This idea of taming, or domination, shows that the male is able to assert himself, despite the threat to his masculinity that the woman poses.

---

[378] Giovanni Francesco Straparola, *Les facétieuses nuits*, trans. by Jean Louveau and Pierre de Larivey, 2 vols (Paris: Jannet 1857), II, 333.
[379] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 109.
[380] Creed, p. 107.
[381] Wolfgang Lederer, *The Fear of Women* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), p. 49.

If we take the image of woman as powerful and controlling, we must ask if there are examples of the lesbian continuum and the inversion of gender roles in other texts. We have seen in the previous chapter how the male seeks out the phallus in order to use its power to regain his masculinity and to continue to attempt to subjugate the woman. However, on some occasions, the male's power fails entirely, due to the influence of the lesbian continuum. This is most obvious in the *Quinze Joyes de mariage*. This is a particularly interesting work, especially given that it is anonymous, short and parodic. The title of the work is ironic, since, as the reader will quickly discover, for the husbands in these stories, there is no joy in marriage. In addition, it uses the framework of 'a prayer to the Virgin enumerating the fifteen joys of her life'.[382] Whatever happens in the story, the husband is unable to get the upper hand over his cunning wife. Maritodespotism is the domination of the husband over the wife, but in the *Quinze Joyes*, it is clearly the inverse – uxorodespotism, or the dominance of the wife. Marriage as a theme in literature was nothing new in the fifteenth century, since other works, such as the *Miroir de Mariage,* also discuss it. Pierre Beauchamp points out that, in the *CNn*, 'l'institution la plus visée par l'esprit tendancieux c'est le mariage, qui est à la fois une institution et le symbole de la répression sexuelle',[383] since it is mentioned in forty-eight of the hundred tales.

The view of marriage proposed by the narrator of the *Quinze Joyes* is intriguing.[384] On one occasion, marriage is described as a 'nasse', or net. This ties in with Villon's bitter reference in stanza LXV, when he talks of escaping from Love's 'las', or snares.

---

[382] *QJm*, p. viii.
[383] Beauchamp, p. 94.
[384] Just as with Villon's *Testament*, it is dangerous to equate the narrator's opinions with the authorial voice. Given that we are dealing with an anonymous author, it is difficult to propose that the opinions expressed in the text are specifically those of the author, just as we cannot state with certainty that the comments made by Villon's testator are Villon's own comments.

This implies that Love, and as a result, women, play a predatory role, hunting the male. Every tale ends with the husband caught in the net, 'ou il finera miserablement ses jours'. Of course, the metaphor of LOVE IS HUNTING is not a new one, as it can be traced back to the work of Ovid and beyond. The relationship is undoubtedly a cagamosis, or unhappy marriage, and whatever the husband does, he is guaranteed to get it wrong and be the object of his wife's wrath and derision. In the fourth tale, for example, the husband returns from a long journey where he has been attempting to make money, but his wife will not even let him get near the fire to warm himself, and ends up beating their son to spite him. When the husband attempts to stop her, the 'nourrisse' and 'chamberiere' both speak up against him – he is 'acculé de tous costez'.[385] This is a perfect example of the lesbian continuum, where women are working together to overthrow patriarchy. The husband is clearly in the right, as it is unfair for the child to be beaten when he has not done anything wrong. However, the women in the house do not want him to gain any power and criticize him, ensuring that he 's'en va couchier sans soupper, sans feu, tout moulliet, tout courouchiet et morfondu'.[386] He is a defeated man. This beating is evocative of the proverbial locution, 'battre le chien devant le lion'.[387] This is the idea that by beating a smaller, weaker person, the stronger will take fright and be more careful. In these individual stories, as Mermier correctly notes, 'il semble que toujours surgisse la notion d'esclavage et en tout cas, celle d'antagonisme'.[388] By the end, these are truly loveless marriages, even if they do not necessarily start out as such.

---

[385] *QJm*, p. 26.
[386] *QJm*, p. 26.
[387] See the *Dlmf*, p. 165.
[388] Guy Mermier, 'La ruse féminine et la fonction morale des *Quinze Joyes de mariage*', *Romance Notes*, 15 (1973-4), 495-503 (p. 498).

It is not only the servants who are on the side of the wife, as, in other tales, we also see the role of the wife's friends, known as her 'commeres'. In the third tale, the wife is pregnant and so the 'commeres' gather at the house. The husband does his best: 'le povre homme quiere et face tant que elles tout ensamble soyent bien aise'.[389] However, the 'commeres' are not at all happy with his behaviour. One even warns the wife, 'ne luy acoustumez pas ainsi a vous mettre soubz le piet, car il vous en feroit autant ou plus en tamps ad venir a vostres autres acouchemens'.[390] The idea of women warning other women has been seen before in these fifteenth-century texts, for example, Villon's Belle Hëaulmiere teaching her 'filles de joie'. In the *Quinze Joyes*, 'women train women, then women train men',[391] as Steven Taylor puts it. In this tale, the wife is not under the thumb, but the husband is, as a direct result of the advice and tips of the older, experienced women. In the tenth story, the wife has an affair, but gets her mother to lie for her and say that she was with her all the time. Women work with other women to help each other and always with the aim of ensuring that their husbands are unable to gain even the slightest bit of domestic power. Mermier puts the blame for the collapse of the marriage squarely at the door of the 'commeres', stepmothers and the like, writing that marriage fails due to 'l'intrusion des *autres* au sein de la monade conjugale'.[392] The idea of women working in unison also appears in the farces. If we take the farce known as *le Cuvier*,[393] for example, there are only three characters: Jaquinot, his wife and his mother-in-law. He begins the farce with a soliloquy, stating that 'le grant dyable me mena bien/Quant je me mis en mariage'.[394]

---

[389] *QJm* p. 14.
[390] *QJm* p. 15.
[391] Steven M. Taylor, 'Wifely Wiles: Comic Unmasking in *Les Quinze Joyes de mariage*' in *New Images of Medieval Women: Studies Toward a Cultural Anthropology*, ed. by Edelgard E. DuBruck (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), pp. 287-302 (p. 296).
[392] Mermier, p. 503.
[393] *Farces* pp. 23-57.
[394] *Farces*, p. 24.

He appears a very henpecked, emasculated character and is even beaten by his wife. In lines 28-9, his mother-in-law tells him that 'il faut obeyr a sa femme,/Ainsy que doibt ung bon mary', meaning that it is clear who rules the domestic roost. However, Jaquinot finally does manage to assert his domestic control, but only by sheer chance. His wife falls into the 'cuve' and he tells her that he will only get her out if she allows him to become 'le maistre'.[395] She agrees, telling him that she will be 'la servante,/ Comme par droict il appartient'.[396] Whilst this appears to be a victory for the male on the surface, it is only brought about by chance. Had his wife not fallen and found herself in a precarious state, Jaquinot would not have been able to usurp the feminine dominance of the domestic sphere. Interestingly, there is a phallic symbol in this farce – the 'rolet' on which Jaquinot is forced to write his tasks. He claims that he cannot help his wife because that particular domestic chore is not 'à mon rolet'.[397] Whilst the 'baston' is the traditional symbol of phallic power, we have seen that there are other possible representations of the phallus, such as the lamprey. We can argue that by possessing the 'rolet', Jaquinot has control of the phallic power, but the fact that the 'rolet' contains tasks that have been allocated to him by his wife makes this a less compelling phallic image.

The sixth of the *Quinze Joyes de mariage* is somewhat similar to that of the lamprey in the *CNn.* The husband is away from home, but is returning with a couple of friends to eat at the house and do some business. In order not to surprise his wife, he sends a servant on ahead to warn her. Out of spite, the wife sends all the servants away, leaving the husband to look a fool in front of his important friends, and allowing her to keep the upper hand. He complains to her, but his protests are useless. As Steven

[395] *Farces*, p. 54.
[396] *Farces*, p. 56.
[397] *Farces*, p. 44, line 207.

Taylor points out, 'even if the urge to rebel does cross a husband's mind, he remains impotent in [this] world view'.[398] We also notice that whilst the wife has the assistance of her 'commeres' to help her in her conjugal battles, the husband has no-one. Like Villon and the husbands of the *Cent Nouvelle nouvelles*, they are denied male company and homosociality, making them 'as pliable as putty'.[399]

One of the other important differences in the *Quinze Joyes* is the lack of beatings. In the *farces*, as we saw previously, the husband would seek to reassert his supremacy by using a stick to beat his wife and thus employ phallic power. In real life, 'canon law specifically allowed wife-beating'.[400] Here, beatings are absent, except in the tenth story. It does no good, as this is an account of how the husband and wife are allowed to separate by law, but then are never allowed to marry again. For all the good the law does the couple, they may as well stay married and avoid the social stigma that a separation will bring. In the *Quinze Joyes*, the fact that the husband does not resort to physically assaulting his wife proves that he has become so downtrodden and defeated by the dominance of his wife that he cannot even seek to use the phallus. The lesbian continuum has succeeded in defeating the patriarchal dominance of the domestic sphere. The society explored in this book, rather than being a phallocracy, is very much a gynarchy. Alison Williams and John Parkin point out that the subjugation of the male is carried out through language. They note the use of 'dompté' and the use of animal metaphors, 'repeatedly likening the husband to passive and stupid beasts fit

[398] Taylor, p. 293.
[399] Taylor, p. 295.
[400] Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. by M. M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 16.

only for slaughter, burden or exploitation'.[401] Furthermore, the wife is able to use her sexuality for her own gain. In the first story, the marital bed is given as one of the key locations in the narrative, since it is here that the wife talks to her husband about the material goods that she desires. Effectively, she is using her sexual wiles to blackmail her husband. Williams and Parkin note that it is here that 'traditionally, the wife submits'.[402] In this story, she is doing nothing of the sort. She is refusing sex and verbally dominating her husband, making language 'a much more effective weapon for women than physical violence would be'.[403] Of course, this statement is subject to discussion, since it would not be at all common for the female to attack the male. Sexuality, as we will see later in this chapter, can be used as an actual weapon, when a woman's sexual desire leads to the death of men. However, it can also be used as a mental weapon. Sexual intercourse is generally conceived as a pleasurable act, designed for procreation. We have already seen how, in Villon, the sexual act is usually described in base terminology, intended to eliminate the pleasurable aspect and make it appear seedy and animalistic. In the *Quinze Joyes*, 'sex is less something shared between partners than a means by which female clans, groups or individuals achieve power over men who are most effectively excluded from the sexual terms of reference imposed by the clan opposing them'.[404] Women are instructed on how to control men through the refusal to have intercourse, leading to further dissatisfaction within the home. Whilst in the *CNn*, the powerful lords who narrate the tales talk of besieging the castles and battering down the doors, the women of the *Quinze Joyes* remain entirely impregnable fortresses, unless they themselves want to use sex and

[401] Alison Williams and John Parkin, 'Feminine Wiles and Masculine Woes: Sexual Dynamics in *Les Quinze Joies de Mariage*' in *French Humour*, ed. by John Parkin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 21-37 (p. 23).
[402] Williams and Parkin, p. 25.
[403] Williams and Parkin, p. 26.
[404] Williams and Parkin, p. 28.

sexuality to gain power. With their feminine power, they are truly castrating women, gradually eroding the masculinity and power of their husbands until they are the entirely dominant figures.

Williams and Parkin also make an insightful comment about the role of the male in the *Quinze Joyes*. They write that, 'it is not the husband's role to fight back, but rather to be an ever more abject victim [or] loser'.[405] This is true, since at no point does the husband ever do anything that might the tip the balance of power back in his favour. He may protest, but they are only ever weak and half-hearted remonstrations. In this way, we can view the husband in the same way that Villon wants us to view him. He never tires of describing himself as the 'povre Villon', who dies a martyr's death. Given that love is the reason for the husband of the *Quinze Joyes* getting married, he would be an equally fitting candidate for the role of a martyr for love.

Furthermore, the lesbian continuum also appears in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*. I have discussed the power of homosociality in the *CNn* but there are also examples of the lesbian continuum. If we take *nouvelle* 28, we have the story of a failed attempt at sexual intercourse. A prince is trying to sleep with a female servant, who shares the bed of the Queen when the King is away. The prince comes up with a plan to get the servant out of the room. He will have a greyhound outside and pull its ears to make it squeal. The servant will have to go out and fetch it, and once outside, they will have sex. However, on the first occasion, the prince is unable to perform. He tries the same trick twice more, but with the same results, and eventually, the servant gives up, returning to the Queen's bed. The fear of impotence is of great importance to the male

[405] Williams and Parkin, p. 30.

psyche and the idea of not being able to perform sexually is undoubtedly a perennial male preoccupation. There seems no physical reason why this should happen to the prince, suggesting that his problem is mental. In medieval society, the rigid hierarchy gave no power to women – except in one case, that of royalty. A Queen was immensely powerful. Fein argues that through sharing the Queen's bed, 'the woman assumes the role of a surrogate, replacing the king in the conjugal bed'.[406] This is a form of empowerment for her. The idea of a strong, powerful woman is shocking to the prince, who therefore is unable to perform. His inability is expressed through a traditional metaphor in the *CNn*, that of SEX IS WAR. The narrator tells us that 'ne fut oncques en sa puissance de tirer sa dague pour esprouver et savoir s'elle pourroit prendre sur ses cuirasses'.[407] The penis is described as a dagger, and the woman's body is presented as though encased in armour.

However, there are also examples of THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING in this tale, which Fein could make much more of than he actually does. We are told that the woman '[lui] ferma l'uys au visage'.[408] Obviously, she did this when she went back into the room to return to bed, but this could also be the metaphorical door that the greyhound, or metaphorically the penis, was attempting to go through. Whilst dogs are not associated with the penis as a usual metaphor, the sexual aspect of the greyhound is implied through innuendo, since when she is apparently complaining about the dog, she is actually bemoaning the prince's sexual shortcomings. The erotic connotations of 'uys' in a story with such a high level of sexuality cannot be denied. Later in the story, when she is supposedly shouting at the dog, she tells it that 'vous

[406] Fein, 2003, p. 69.
[407] *CNn*, p. 194.
[408] *CNn*, p. 194.

n'y entrerez meshuy',[409] continuing this metaphor. Spearing points out that in the traditional royal chamber, 'the central feature ... is the bed, the place where male and female are joined'.[410] This space is gendered both female and male because of this, but given that two women are sharing the bed in this tale, we see a lesbian relationship being put before a heterosexual relationship. By the term 'lesbian', I mean to bring this into the remit of the lesbian continuum. Bonds between women are meant to overthrow patriarchy. Given that heterosexual relationships where men dominate women could be seen as a key part of patriarchy, this is a powerful victory for the lesbian continuum. The idea of male hegemony is conveyed through the metaphor I studied above, where the prince wants to slip his dagger into the armour. By its very nature, this violent image suggests male primacy, but it is subverted through his impotence. Female desire is so powerful that the male cannot perform. The idea of the lesbian continuum could be subverted in this story if there were a lesbian relationship between the Queen and the servant and although Fein acknowledges this as a possibility,[411] it seems that there is no evidence for seeing it as anything more than possible veiled hint. When speaking to her would-be lover, the girl says, 'je vous vouldroye complaire, et faire autant de plaisir et aussi de bon cueur que a elle',[412] with 'elle' referring to the Queen. Whilst this deliberately ambiguous phrase does suggest some form of intimacy, a gendered reading of this tale is much more rewarding. Pierdominici makes the point that 'l'homosexualité féminine pourrait ne pas être explicitée parce que dans ce cas, ce genre de comportement étant

[409] *CNn*, p. 196.
[410] Spearing, p. 17.
[411] Fein, 2003, p. 72.
[412] *CNn*, p. 192.

considéré comme normal voire acceptable dans le milieu noble dont l'ouvrage est issu, il serait tout simplement sous-entendu'.[413]

From these examples, we can see that women with sexual desire are dangerous. They might have toothed vaginas, they might cause impotence, and in the next tale, they even cause death. *Nouvelle* 55 is the story of a girl struck down by bubonic plague. Hoping for a cure, she speaks to her older neighbour. Already here, we can see similarities between the neighbour and the stock figure represented in the *Testament* by the Belle Hëaulmiere. They decide that having sex with various men may cure the girl of her illness, and eventually, having slept with four men, she is indeed cured. David Fein sees this as an example of 'the conflation of virulent disease and sexual desire'.[414] It is an example of the conceptual metaphor, LOVE IS DISEASE. In the second chapter, we discussed a possible link between the idea of 'dying for love' and masturbation, but here, we can see the physical effects of sexual desire and disease. The fact that she brings about the deaths of the men with whom she has sex suggests that female sexual desire is very dangerous for the male. The girl seems to be portrayed in this story as a sort of 'femme fatale'. She is using sex for her own ends, and is powerful, taking on the attributes of the phallic woman. Furthermore, the fact that she is aided and abetted by another woman suggests that the lesbian continuum is at work in this story as well. The more men that can be killed, the more weakened patriarchy will be. Is it not one of the key aims of the lesbian continuum to work against patriarchy?

[413] Pierdominici, pp. 106-7.
[414] Fein, 2003, p. 41.

In addition, this tale represents the reversal of gender roles within the story. The traditional rules suggest that the woman does not go out and attempt to seduce men, but the man attempts to seduce the woman. Here, the woman controls, actively going out and looking for men. When one of the men discovers that he is dying of the plague, he condemns the girl, saying that she is 'digne de estre brullée et mise en cendre',[415] but then immediately pardons her. This seems somewhat bizarre. If we look again at the *Testament*, we have the testator launching attacks on people who have wronged him and dying a martyr's death, with no remorse for what he has said or done. In this story, the man dies as a victim and additionally, as a martyr, since, from the perspective of the narrator of the tale, he has committed no wrong; yet he is still able to pardon and forgive the girl who has done this to him. Why, therefore, do we see such differences in attitude? Is there an element of guilt here on the part of the male, since he slept with the woman so willingly? Can his death be seen as a punishment for the sin of fornication?

Any study looking at the representation of women must take into account the act of looking, and the theory of the gaze. Laura Mulvey proposed that the gaze was masculine. She stated that whilst the man could look, the woman had to be looked at, and is thus objectified by the male gaze. Scopophilia, or the pleasure of looking at someone as an erotic object, is a key part of this. In Villon, we see examples of looking, but the gaze is also problematized. We have already discussed the passage spoken by the Belle Hëaulmiere, where we mentioned the portrait she paints of herself, describing her various body parts. Jane Taylor points out that whilst we may feel that this is a fetishized portrait, the fact that the Belle Hëaulmiere is teaching her

[415] *CNn*, p. 350.

'filles de joie', suggests the possession of power. She states that 'a strongly realised and vocal first person is taking charge of a body that we would normally read as a phantasmatic construction of the male gaze'.[416] However, Taylor also correctly notes that 'there is ... a blurring of the distinction between extratextual reality and fictional diegesis'.[417] In lines 453-5, Villon claims only to overhear her words and then in lines 563-4, states that he has had them written down. This allows for the male gaze to remain dominant as the polyphony of the passage keeps the Belle Hëaulmiere as a separate, independent character.

Later in the *Testament*, if we take the ballade known as the *Contredictz de Franc Gontier*, we see the idea of looking in line 1480. We are told that he saw them 'par ung trou de mortaise'. Mühlethaler writes that, 'la position de voyeur correspond bien au statut d'exclu, de marginal qui caractérise la *persona* poétique de Villon'.[418] Villon also describes dame Sidoine as 'blanche, tendre, polye et attintee' in line 1476, showing that he is studying the feminine form in detail. It is also crucial to mention the possible erotic context of the 'trou' through which the narrator looks, suggesting the vagina. However, this passage is much more interesting for its use of the scopophilic instinct. It is particularly patent in the *CNn*. In the second tale, Beauchamp notes that the '[cordelier médecin] 's'attarde à contempler la nudité de sa patiente'.[419] In the twelfth tale, we see a husband who enjoys gazing at his wife's naked body, especially the buttocks. The narrator devotes a long passage to the description of the woman's body and it prepares the reader for the sexual intercourse that is to follow. Tale 49, like Villon's *Contredictz de Franc Gontier,* contains

[416] Jane H. M. Taylor, 2001, p. 94.
[417] Jane H. M. Taylor, 2001, p. 95.
[418] Mühlethaler, p. 260.
[419] Beauchamp, p. 111.

someone who 'par aucuns secrez pertus et treilliz regardoit en pluseurs aultres lieux et chambres de leens'.[420] The best example, however, of voyeurism is to be found in the first tale.

A woman is having an affair with her neighbour. When her husband goes away on business, she is quick to go next door and have sex. Unfortunately for them, the husband returns unexpectedly and stops at the neighbour's house to see him. The lover tells the woman, still in bed, to make sure she covers her face. Her husband comes in and asks to see the neighbour's lover. He reveals only her buttocks, which confuses the man, as he thinks that they look very much like his wife's buttocks. He then sits down to eat, giving the wife a chance to escape back home. When he returns home, he tells her that he thought it was her in the neighbour's bed, but she denies it outright, forcing the husband to apologise.

The importance of looking here is obvious. The narrator tells us that 'le bon compaignon, toujours la chandelle en sa main, fut assez longuement sans dire mot'.[421] The candle is clearly a phallic symbol, particularly when read in conjunction with the idea of scopophilia and the buttocks. Here, the male gaze can see only one object – the buttocks. The husband thinks he recognises his wife, but he cannot be certain, as he is blinded by this one element. The woman has been reduced to a sexualised object. There is similar gazing upon the buttocks in the twelfth tale. Fein notes that the woman has been fetishized, but does not go far enough in his analysis.[422] Fetishism works through 'over-investment' in certain parts of the body, in this case, the buttocks. Mulvey argues that, 'woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and

[420] *CNn*, p. 319.
[421] *CNn*, p. 26.
[422] Fein, 2003, p. 29.

enjoyment of men, ... always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified'.[423] By this, she refers to the Freudian concept of castration anxiety. However, through fetishism, the female body 'becomes reassuring rather than dangerous'.[424] As I stated in the first chapter, the male also seeks to protect himself from castration through phallic symbols. The fact that we see both the candle and the fetish here suggests the power of the female body.

We can also return to David LaGuardia's ideas regarding homosociality, as he examines this tale in depth. Looking at the scene above, he states that it 'represents the configuration that unites the two men in a reciprocal relationship founded upon an obsession with the image of the female body as a minimalist icon for sex'.[425] This is true, but the problem here is with LaGuardia's understanding of the relationship. The men are not united through sexual relations with a woman that they both have in common, as the husband does not know that his wife is having an affair. Furthermore, the two lovers are laughing at the cuckolded husband behind his back. LaGuardia then argues that the fact that the man gets to eat at the end is a form of exchange, in that 'the husband enjoys the goods of his neighbour's table while the *bourgeois* takes possession of the other man's wife'.[426] This is a simple misreading, since we are told that the man enjoys only the leftovers, something which LaGuardia himself has translated as 'the remainder of the feast'.[427] It is more daylight robbery than a balanced transaction, something that heavily undermines LaGuardia's statement.

[423] Mulvey, p. 29.
[424] Mulvey, p. 29.
[425] LaGuardia, p. 60.
[426] LaGuardia, p. 61.
[427] LaGuardia, p. 61.

We should also notice the submissiveness of the husband at the end of the story. He kneels and sobs in front of his wife, begging her forgiveness. She has been able to completely turn the tables on him and invert the traditional social roles. By verbally attacking her husband and going on the offensive, she is able to subjugate her husband. Here, we can see a feminisation of the male, and therefore, a masculinisation of the female, making her the dominant partner in the domestic sphere. We can see from this tale that as the woman is so heavily objectified in the male gaze, he becomes blinded as to what is really going on. Although the woman is revealed in the bed, her identity is concealed, enabling her to deceive her husband with ease. Her sexual desire, a desire not being satisfied by her husband, has led to her husband's downfall and subjugation.

In the texts that I have studied in this chapter, we have seen the changing role of women. In the Middle Ages, 'the position of women is one thing in theory, another in legal position, yet another in everyday life'.[428] Mermier points out that this change is not entirely fictitious, since, 'la femme, au cours du moyen âge, en effet, a vu sa situation sociale s'améliorer à la mesure de l'évolution des mœurs féodales'.[429] However, whilst this may be true, it is a case of exchanging one problem for another, as Power argues that 'feudal marriage carried with it a certain denigration of woman as a person [as] while the Church subordinated woman to her husband, feudalism subordinated her to her fief'.[430] The women of the texts I have examined are constantly rebelling and controlling their husbands, rather than being dominated and subjugated by them. Even Villon, who is not married, ends up suffering at the hands of women. It is necessary to examine this supposed growth in female power. Is it

[428] Power, p. 9.
[429] Mermier, p. 498.
[430] Power, p. 19.

merely a fictionalized representation of women? Shulamith Shahar argues that 'in medieval society, as in all ages, strong women did not obey their husbands in all things, and in some cases even dominated them'.[431] This is to be expected, as no matter how strong a social code may be, there will always be those that transgress it. Of course, we tend to discuss women in the Middle Ages as a general concept. It is critical to make distinctions between the women of the nobility, the women of the peasantry and other independent women, such as nuns. The texts studied here look at married women and women of lower social class. Whilst abbesses may appear in the *CNN*, none of the texts discuss the power of women with fiefdoms, for example. Therefore, we can see that this change in social roles is representative of the society of the period in which women were not as dominated as we may be led to believe.

The importance of the way in which women were considered can be judged by their pre-eminence in these texts. In the *CNn*, for example, eighty-eight of the hundred tales have female protagonists. We must also note that men wrote the *Testament* and the *CNn*. The identity of the author of the *Quinze Joyes* is unclear, but is widely believed to have been male also. Women writers are, as a general rule, mute. Christine de Pisan is the great exception to this rule, as 'the sole full-time female writer in the Middle Ages'.[432] She, along with Jean Gerson, spoke out in defence of the woman and her constant denigration. She attacked the *Roman de la Rose*, launching a great debate and sparking a discussion of anti-feminine literature in what became known as the 'Querelle du *Roman de la Rose*'.[433] In another book, the *Cité des Dames*, she created a collection of tales that discussed the virtues of women, promoting them. However, as

[431] Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Chaya Galai (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), p. 90.
[432] Shahar, p. 166.
[433] See Eric Hicks, *Le Débat sur 'Le Roman de la Rose'* (Paris: Champion, 1977).

Shahar states, rather than asking for sexual equality and an end to male hegemony, she 'merely sought to defend women who had been treated unjustly by the male authors and to elevate the moral and intellectual image of the woman'.[434] Of course, it was not only women who spoke out in defence of their own sex. Male authors also had comments to make against the decrying of women. Martin Le Franc's *Le Champion des dames*,[435] written around 1440, is an interesting example. A very long work, it is written in five books, the third of which is an examination of the *Roman de la Rose*. Interestingly, the *Champion des dames* is told through allegory, just like the *Roman de la Rose*. The champion of women, Franc Vouloir, is pitted in battle against Malebouche, a defamer of women. The fourth book of the five is a courtroom scene, in which the case for women's virtue is argued back and forth dialectically, with a list of "good" women, including Joan of Arc and the Nine Muses being cited, as well as some of the more problematic women, such as witches.[436] This book, in addition to the contribution of other male authors, such as Jean Gerson, is important proof that not all male writers of the medieval period had a misogynistic and negative view of women, despite what the key texts studied here may suggest.

French literature boasts a long tradition of anti-feminist writing, but these texts are particularly powerful. Villon criticizes love, stating that it is best not to love. The *CNn* treat women as playthings to be captured and conquered, whilst the *Quinze Joyes* denounces marriage as an institution. The images they create of women are not pleasant. Women are dangerous, powerful, vicious and generally problematic and threatening for the masculinities with which they come into contact. In this way, this

[434] Shahar, p. 168.
[435] Martin Le Franc, *Le Champion des dames*, ed. by Robert Deschaux, 5 vols (Paris: Champion, 1999).
[436] See Martin Le Franc, *The Trial of Womankind: A Rhyming Translation of Book IV of the Fifteenth-Century 'Le Champion des Dames'*, ed. and trans. by Steven Millen Taylor (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005).

literature can be seen as a warning to other men not to become involved with women and love. It is rare indeed for a man to be able to control his wife and even in the *CNn*, a collection of tales for men by men, women are still able to extricate themselves from seemingly hopeless situations and come out the victors. Therefore, is it possible that, as Mermier claims, 'l'homme, obligé par la pression sociale d'abandonner à la femme certains de ses privilèges, compensait ses concessions en faisant appel à son vieux fond de rancune contre la femme',[437] by attacking women through literature? It is indeed an interesting hypothesis. However, when it is considered that the *fabliaux* used very similar storylines for comic purposes, it is unlikely that the man is making up for a real loss of power through literary attacks. These are old themes being recycled. Beauchamp posits another argument, suggesting that the *CNn* show what happens when the traditional behaviour of society is inverted. He states that:

> Les éléments du récit s'opposent aux institutions en montrant ce qui se passait lorsque le peuple mettait de côté les usages, les lois et les traditions de la vie quotidienne pour se défouler. La transgression devient loi. Une œuvre carnivalisée reflétera *la vie à l'envers* et non la vie quotidienne.[438]

The bizarre world of the *CNn*, with its incest, prostitution, castration, sodomy and much more is certainly not a traditional world. A reversal in gender roles is also part of this. It cannot happen in real life, so it is part of 'la vie à l'envers'.

[437] Mermier, p. 498.
[438] Beauchamp, p. 116.

Whilst the *CNn* and *Quinze Joyes* are pure fiction, Villon's *Testament* has been taken by many to be autobiographical. However, this does not mean that this is necessarily the case. If Villon were simply looking for interesting subject matter, then attacking women in a changing period would have been more than suitable. Villon's attack, however, is not limited to women. He attacks anyone who might be considered better than him on a social or economic level. Men, as well as women, fall victim to his veiled insults and insinuations, making the *Testament* appear an attempt to settle old scores and the only way for a marginal figure to seek some form of redress for what he views as unjust events that have befallen him. In that aspect, the *Testament* differs from the other texts, as women play a more marginal role in it. Whilst Villon certainly has an element of resentment towards the fairer sex, he has many more axes to grind.

Conclusion

In a study such as this, limited by constraints of both space and time, we cannot hope to examine the full range of the rich literature that the fifteenth century has provided. However, in choosing such landmark texts, we can allow ourselves an overview of the period and the attitudes that the writers demonstrate. I have not attempted to examine every critical interpretation of Villon's work, and I have only been able to look at a sample of stories from the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, but even this limited corpus has provided a wide scope for the examination of sexuality, imagery and the representation of gender roles in the Middle Ages.

The aim of this thesis was to shed new light on Villon's *Testament* and although the methodology chosen to do this was eclectic, it has enabled me to obtain a number of insights. The first chapter of this thesis explored the various sexual allusions that may or may not be present in Villon's work, depending on the view of the critic or editor. John Fox states that 'Villon's age was extremely open about sex, making no attempt to conceal it'.[439] Certainly, some of the more explicit poems in the *Parnasse satyrique* that delight in profanity are proof of this statement. Euphemistic or metaphorical language is often not used. Various poems appear to have been written for the sheer delight of using taboo words, such as 'couille', 'vis', 'bren' and 'foutre'.[440] It is what Leonard W. Johnson refers to as 'a kind of paroxysm of verbal lewdness'.[441] However, the *Parnasse satyrique* is somewhat of a special case. There is no denying the fact that metaphor and imagery are used enormously throughout the writing of the fifteenth century. Euphemisms, by definition, are a form of periphrasis. They are

---

[439] Fox, 1984, p. 101.
[440] Marcel Schwob, *Le Parnasse satyrique du quinzième siècle: anthologie de pièces libres* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969 [Paris: H Welter, 1905]), pp. 58, 148 and 130 respectively.
[441] Johnson, p. 273.

words intended to be less offensive or disturbing than the words they replace. Therefore, if we are exchanging 'vit' for 'bourdon', or swapping vaginas for doors, it suggests that the fifteenth century may not have been quite as open to sex as Fox would have us believe. Indeed, one of the most telling examples of this comes from the *Facecies de Poge*. This work originally appeared in Latin in Italy as the *Liber facetiarum* and was translated into French by Guillaume Tardif in approximately 1492. Poggio Bracciolini's original work was explicitly sexual, and when Tardif came to translate it, he argued that a literal translation was not possible, since the original author had included 'plusieurs motz latins, lesquelz plusieurs pourroyent reputer vilz et infames'.[442] Therefore, as Duval and Hériché-Pradeau point out, 'il suffisait à Tardif, comme il l'a d'ailleurs fait, de remplacer les termes choquants en latin par des termes plus imagés en français'.[443] Therefore, Tardif effectively rewrote and toned down Poggio's work in order to avoid allegations of obscenity, and also because of his own moral agenda, being at one time, tutor to the French *dauphin*. Duval and Hériché-Pradeau state that through this use of imagery, or what Tardif called 'parolles couvertes', 'Tardif met l'accent sur la manière de dire plutôt que sur la réalité à laquelle il renvoie'.[444] However, as Nelly Labère notes, since Tardif has included so many sexual metaphors and the like, 'les « parolles couvertes » théoriques deviennent en pratique des termes crus, véritables objets de création lexicale'.[445] Far from veiling the supposed obscenity of Poggio's text, Tardif has actually accentuated it. However, Tardif also sought to add a moral aspect to the tales. This attitude emphasises the

---

[442] Tardif, p. 86.
[443] Tardif, p. 24.
[444] Tardif, p. 30.
[445] Nelly Labère, '« Le livre qui a envahi, souillé, infecté la France, l'Espagne, l'Allemagne, l'Angleterre et tous les autres pays de langue latine » ou comment traduire en français une œuvre cochonne ?: Etude du langage figuré dans la traduction des *Facéties* du Pogge de Guillaume Tardif à la fin du XV^{e} siècle'. Paper delivered at the XIIe Colloque international sur le moyen français: 'Le langage figuré', held at McGill University, Montréal (4-6 October 2004), forthcoming in *Le Moyen Français*. Many thanks go to Dr Labère for allowing me access to this unpublished paper.

power of social constraints in the period and argues against linguistic sexual frankness. Labère states that because of this, 'le lecteur se trouve face à un texte bicéphale, divisé entre un récit comique et scabreux et une moralité se voulant édification'.[446] If we compare this text to the *CNn*, for example, in the latter text, we do not find moralistic statements from the narrators. In keeping with their heritage from the *fabliaux*, the *CNn* are much more interested in the scabrous and the bawdy than in making comments on, or condemning, immoral behaviour. Therefore, we can argue that Tardif's translation creates an intriguing picture of his personal beliefs regarding obscenity, morality and sexuality.

Beauchamp claims that there was a 'manque de vocabulaire officiel'[447] to discuss sexual matters. He argues that 'le peuple invente un vocabulaire à partir de ce qu'il connaît', so that 'le vocabulaire obscène est donc intimement lié au contexte historique et social qui l'a vu naître'.[448] It is certainly true that the metaphors used are suitable for the lived experience of those who use them. This is the idea of 'common ground' – conceptual knowledge, shared by the speaker and listener. If we take the military metaphors, such as jousting and battles that we see employed in the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, it is fitting that they are used by gentlemen in Philippe le Bon's ducal court. As people who had fought on battlefields, they are applying their common experience to sexual matters. Pursuing a woman is not seen so much as wooing or sensual seduction, but as an aggressive pursuit, leading to eventual domination. Some of the more profane metaphors employed by Villon are those that you would indeed expect to see used by an outsider who professes to enjoy his status as a fringe figure and who appears to take pleasure in wallowing in the filth of the

[446] Labère.
[447] Beauchamp, p. 95.
[448] Beauchamp, p. 95.

brothel with la Grosse Margot. We do not see the writers of a higher social class using coarse terminology or imagery, in the same way that Villon's higher language is reserved for special cases, such as the laudation of the Virgin Mary or the ballade for Robert d'Estouteville.

It is irrefutable that the various critical interpretations of Villon have provided a wealth of material and some interesting, humorous, contradictory and downright bizarre possible ways of reading his protean poetry. It is impossible to provide a final, definitive reading which explains every allusion in the *Testament*. It is true that as we come to understand more about the period, then we can understand more of the references. Its author has been dead for many years, and despite our great knowledge of the fifteenth century, there are still annoying gaps that we are unable to fill. Indeed, it was only comparatively recently, in 1981, that the Bietrix and Aliz mentioned in the *Ballade des dames du temps jadis*, were identified.[449] In a way, these lacunae and far-ranging possibilities can increase our enjoyment of the text. Wolfgang Iser, discussing literary tendencies, writes that:

> Literary texts ... were reduced [by some critics] to the level of documents, and thus robbed of that very dimension that sets them apart from the document, namely, the opportunity they offer us to experience for ourselves the spirit of the age, social conditions, the author's neuroses, etc. It is a vital feature of literary texts that they do not lose their ability to communicate; indeed, many

[449] Fox, 1984, p. 99.

> of them can still speak even when their message has long since passed into history.[450]

Iser is not writing on Villon specifically, but his statement fits Villonian criticism very well. The *Testament* is not an historical document, but it certainly allows us to experience the fifteenth century and is undoubtedly still speaking today. There are unquestionably misrepresentations and far-fetched interpretations, such as the idea that Villon is a victim of anal rape in the *ballade de conclusion*, but it is a sign of the quality of Villon's poetry that he is still confounding critics so many years later. He has successfully exploited the ability of language to be polysemantic and interpretations of his poetry remain labile. Obviously, this did not happen by chance; it was a deliberate action on Villon's part. As Dufournet puts it, writing on the 'génération de Louis XI', 'tout se passe comme si le texte ne se donnait pas à lire en clair, comme si était constamment opposée au lecteur une opacité qui stimule son activité et son plaisir'.[451] Do we actually want to provide a definitive reading and a finished product? Or, is it perhaps, like Gaudí's cathedral in progress, the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, actually more attractive in its unfinished state? Jane Taylor wonders if 'medieval readers did not rather look to Villon for *dis*-unity and *dis*-integration and *in*-stability'.[452] As she notes, it is an immensely difficult question to answer, given our relative lack of knowledge of the period, but certainly, enduring mysteries and multiple possibilities tend to be more interesting than something that is uniform, simple and finished. As Dufournet concludes, 'le lecteur alliera de façon indissociable la jubilation de sa lecture à la résignation de ses questions laissées en

---

[450] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 13.
[451] Jean Dufournet, 'La Génération de Louis XI: quelques aspects', *Le Moyen Age*, 98 (1992), 227-50 (230).
[452] Jane H. M. Taylor, 2001, p. 177.

suspens, il savourera l'inachèvement de ses interprétations, il appréciera sa frustration même. Et c'est de son égarement dans ces textes foisonnants que naîtra son plaisir'.[453]

Any work of fiction, or even a work purporting to be fact, such as an autobiography, must be read with care. There are always going to be elements of exaggeration and misrepresentations of the truth. Given that the *Testament* is a vituperative document, with the testator bitterly attacking people for perceived wrongs done to him, it is legitimate to suggest that there may be some untruths in the comments the testator makes about important figures of fifteenth-century society, such as Thibault d'Aussigny. The ideas put forward by the testator, or indeed, the narrators of the *CNn*, may not be those of the author. Indeed, they may be entirely fictitious. They do, however, give us a vivid picture of the period in which the texts were composed. Villon's Paris, with its street signs, inns, brothels and amazing cast of characters, is brought alive through the text and overall, the indeterminacy of the text actually makes it more interesting, since it serves to add to this rich tapestry of literature. There is no doubt that the *Testament* is filled with sexuality, to which there are implicit and explicit references. However, the first chapter of this thesis demonstrated that it is problematic to assume multiple meanings in every case. Evelyn Birge Vitz wrote that 'a symbolic equivalence, once established between two words or objects, extends in its general effect to other words with more or less the same meaning, or to words pertaining to the same domain of reality'.[454] However, this analytical approach meant that too much emphasis was placed on sexual meanings. Sometimes, whatever the cumulative effect of metaphor may be, a sword really is just a sword, and not the penis. It is always legitimate to search for innuendo or deliberately ambiguous phrases

[453] Dufournet, 1992, p. 250.
[454] Vitz, p. 29.

as this is part of humour. The 'nudge, nudge, wink, wink' humour was just as much a part of fifteenth-century literature as it is in twenty-first century society. However, latent meanings cannot always be assumed and, as we have seen in the first chapter, there are distinct examples of very tenuous interpretations, based on insufficient textual evidence. For example, we have Walter Blue's suggestion that, in the *ballade de conclusion*, 'Villon's muddlement ends in physical masturbation, an act of deliberately flaunted sterile sex'.[455] Modern critical interpretations are normally in agreement when considering the large range of alleged sexual references in the *Testament*. As we have seen, when phallic images are current in other texts of the period, textual reinforcement of a hypothesis does not pose a problem. However, when modern critics are finding supposed homosexual, or even heterosexual, references where none have ever been suggested before, this is more problematic. We must ask ourselves if, during the composition of the *Testament*, Villon could ever have imagined some of the interpretations of his work that have been proposed. Modern thinking will always allow for more possibilities than were originally suspected by previous generations of critics and readers. Essentially, some of the modern readings, particularly when using psychoanalysis or other modern concepts and theories, are rewarding, rich and interesting. We should not dismiss these theories out of hand, simply because they were not articulated when the works were originally written. However, it is necessary to be restrained. We have seen the trap that Pierre Guiraud fell into and it would be dangerous for modern critics to do the same. The *Testament* is filled with ambiguities, there are different ways to read the *CNn* and there are various images and concepts that can be found in the other texts. We should

[455] cf. p. 59 and p. 102.

be receptive to these, but be aware at the same time that not everything in the Middle Ages had sexual connotations.

Chapter two examined the representation of the male in fifteenth-century texts, applying concepts derived from psychoanalysis and metaphor theory. Given that the bequests to the legatees in the *Testament* had been discussed in the first chapter, it was necessary to have a better picture of the Villon persona proposed by the testator. No single, uniform picture of the character can be drawn, due to the various contradictions and oppositions put forward throughout the text. However, as well as physical descriptions, it is important to look at references to the body that appear through symbolism, and what this means on a psychoanalytic level. Psychoanalysis makes much of the power of the phallus as a symbol of male domination, and in the *Testament* and the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, there is a preponderance of phallic imagery. We have seen swords, lamprey eels, lances, sausages and even ferrets, to name but a few. The male characters seek out the phallus for their own empowerment and to reinforce the prevalent homosocial bonds of the society in which they live. Platonic male companionship is valued more highly than that of a male-female sexual relationship. The *Testament*, with the majority of its characters being male, clearly participates in homosocial discourse, as does the *CNn* – a hundred tales, narrated by men to an audience of men.

Psychoanalysis has allowed us an insight into the world of the fifteenth century through its literature. Given that its use in previous Villon studies has been extremely limited, this aspect has enabled me to shed new light on these key texts and has enriched the critical literature through the links made between Villon, the *CNn* and

other subsidiary texts, such as the *Sermons joyeux* or the *Facecies de Poge*. I do not argue that all the phallic symbols, or indeed, all the other sexual metaphors contained in the texts have psychoanalytic interpretations. There are other reasons for the use of metaphor, such as Cristina Azuela's assertion that 'la pratique de présenter les allusions érotiques sous la forme d'un jeu verbal (double entente, équivoque, métaphore malicieuse) vient d'une longue tradition'.[456] A wide range of metaphors and stylistic devices are used in the texts, and some of them remain current even now, in the twenty-first century. Villon is a master of language. Whilst there is no historical evidence to show that Villon ever took part in a 'puy', or competition to compose verse, Jane Taylor makes a convincing argument that his work demonstrates links to it.[457] It can be imagined that a skilled poet such as Villon would have delighted in competing and demonstrating his skills to a wider audience. The *Testament*, with its complicated mix of puns, exclamations, suggestions, innuendo and much more, is a great example of Villon's linguistic expertise. He is able to move from a low register in his *Ballade de la Grosse* Margot to elevated language in the ballade for Robert d'Estouteville.

Chapter two also demonstrated that similar imagery is used in all of the texts. The same metaphors for the penis and the vagina, as well as locutions for sexual intercourse, appear repeatedly in the various texts. We have also seen how they belong to common conceptual metaphors. If the penis is represented as a sword, it belongs to the conceptual metaphor of SEX IS WAR. When the penis appears as a sausage, it is part of HUMAN BODY PARTS ARE FOOD. The penis is also represented as an animal, making it part of the conceptual metaphor, HUMAN BODY

[456] Azuela, p. 35.
[457] Jane H. M. Taylor, 2001, pp. 8-9.

PARTS ARE ANIMALS. We also see female body parts, such as the vagina, belonging to the larger metaphor of THE HUMAN BODY IS A BUILDING. The fact that these conceptual metaphors are so widespread means that the authors' use of them is not particularly original. The majority of them can be traced back through history, to the time of Ovid and beyond. Very few are actually new. This means that fifteenth-century authors had a rich vein of imagery on which they could draw and would have the added advantage that their destined audience would immediately be familiar with them – again, the notion of 'common ground' that I discussed earlier. Certainly, there are moments of originality in the Villonian oeuvre, but in terms of metaphor, Villon has very much reused old material. I have also shown how some of the plots and ideas in the *CNn* have their origins in the *fabliaux*, proving that the later text has greatly benefited and inherited from its precursors. The *fabliaux* were already widespread at the start of the thirteenth century, meaning that the authors of two centuries later had plenty of material to develop.

Chapter three explored the representation of women in the key texts. The *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* display a misogynistic, antifeminist view of women, but with numerous examples of the woman gaining the upper hand and inverting the social hierarchy of the time. The *Quinze Joyes de mariage* also demonstrate a revolution in the domestic sphere and of course, Villon's hyperbolic suffering at the hands of Love and women shows a man whose masculinity can be called into question. Men attempt to reassert their dominance through the use of the phallus, but they fail. They attempt to use fetishes to protect themselves, but they fail. They are denied the company of their own sex by their female masters and it is only in language that men finally have some power. Villon is able to break the bonds of the dualism of

domination/dominated, as instead of being the passive figure that is assaulted, it is now he who is doing the assaulting. He can dominate his former antagonists through his writing. The pen is truly mightier than the sword. As Daniel Lawrence O' Keefe puts it, 'the power to name has often been considered a way to subjugate the Other'.[458] With the testator "dead", he no longer has to worry about possible recriminations from those he has insulted or attacked in his invective.

The lesbian continuum, the female equivalent of homosociality, is patent in the third chapter. It is a concept only defined in the twentieth century, so it may seem odd or anachronistic to apply it to the past, but I have shown numerous examples of women working together to overthrow patriarchy in our key texts. Even though Christine de Pisan did not ask for gender equality in her complaints against the *Roman de la Rose*, and did not articulate arguments against the primacy of the male sex and its phallogocentric discourse, it is undeniable that a reversal in gender roles and a subversion of the male-dominated hierarchy is at work here. I do not argue that the 'commeres' of the *Quinze Joyes* are precursors to the feminists of the twentieth century and I do not suggest that they are active in using psychoanalysis as a political tool, but we can undoubtedly see the lesbian continuum in action, even if its existence as a theoretical term has not been articulated in the society of the time. Writing on the *fabliaux*, Simon Gaunt argues that 'without having a theory of gender, the texts themselves theorize gender through their own practice'.[459] This is equally true for the texts that I have examined.

[458] Daniel Lawrence O' Keefe, quoted in Cholakian, p. 226.
[459] Gaunt, p. 288.

Chapter three has argued for the woman as a dominating, aggressive, threatening character. In line with Charity Cannon Willard, we could propose that 'women were not necessarily helpless and submissive creatures and that if life was not to their liking, they were capable of taking matters into their own hands, for better or for worse'.[460] However, we can go much further than that and suggest that the texts I have studied are intended as a warning for men, advising them to not to become involved in marriage and love ('bien eureux est qui rien n'y a!', writes Villon in line 632), lest they be caught in a 'fosse' – 'telles fosses fait l'en pour prendre bestes sauvaiges es forestz'.[461] The idea of a man, foolishly blundering headlong into the clutches of the woman, is clear. The image of the castrating woman with her *vagina dentata*, though not described explicitly in the key texts, stands out as a particularly threatening concept. The women of the *Quinze Joyes* only take the male's masculinity metaphorically, whereas the castrating women of legend and folklore are capable of a physical penectomy. These folkloric stories are clearly a representation of male preoccupations regarding the power of the female and a sheer dread of emasculation. We saw in the third chapter that there were some women with power, but as a general rule, the female was subjugated to the male. The male author feels powerful enough to denigrate the woman through literature, knowing that in real life she does not have enough power to turn the tables on him.

In the various texts, we see a lot of humour, even when dealing with dark themes. Humour is a way of offsetting this and prevents the works from taking on a heavier tone. Despite the serious message that the *Quinze Joyes de mariage* might send regarding marriage as an institution in the fifteenth century, the subtle humour means

[460] Charity Cannon Willard, 'Women and Marriage Around 1400: Three Views', *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 17 (1990), 475-84 (p. 481).
[461] *QJm*, p. 1.

that the reader will end up laughing at the hapless husband. Villon's attacks may appear malevolent, but in their atmosphere of theatricality, even their viciousness is blunted to a degree. The authors of the texts delight in manipulating and subverting language, creating images and using linguistic devices to construct powerful works which show fifteenth-century society, with its changing social and gender roles, in all its glory. Do they have a message to tell? The *Quinze Joyes* would certainly seem to warn the public about marriage and women. The *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* were told as tales at court and, therefore, may have been intended much more as entertainment than as didactic stories. The recipients of Villon's *Testament* are also unclear. In my first chapter, I postulated that the *Testament* could be read as a comic monologue in the Parisian taverns, but it may also have served as a form of revenge for Villon. Despite the contrasting audiences, we have seen three powerful works that show a great deal about the mentality of the fifteenth century and demonstrate a deep understanding of both metaphor and gender.

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Bataille, Georges, *Madame Edwarda* (Paris: J. J. Pauvert, 1956)

Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles, ed. by Luciano Rossi (Paris: Livre de Poche, forthcoming)

Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles, ed. by Franklin P. Sweetser (Geneva: Droz, 1966)

Conteurs français du XVIe siècle, ed. by Pierre Jourda (Paris: Gallimard, 1965)

Farces du Moyen Age, ed. by André Tissier (Paris: Flammarion, 1984)

Jeanroy, A. and E. Droz, *Deux manuscrits de François Villon (Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 1661 et 20041)* (Paris: Droz, 1932)

Le Franc, Martin, *Le Champion des dames*, ed. by Robert Deschaux, 5 vols (Paris: Champion, 1999)

Le Franc, Martin, *The Trial of Womankind: A Rhyming Translation of Book IV of the Fifteenth-Century 'Le Champion des Dames'*, ed. and trans. by Steven Millen Taylor (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005)

Lorris, Guillaume de, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. by Félix Lecoy, 3 vols (Paris: Champion, 1965-70)

Mabille, Emile, *Choix de farces, sotties et moralités des 15^{e} et 16^{e} siècles* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970)

Noomen, Willem and Nico van den Boogaard, *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, 10 vols (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983-98)

The Poetic Works of Alain Chartier, ed. by J. C. Laidlaw (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974)

Quatre Sermons joyeux, ed. by Jelle Koopmans (Geneva: Droz, 1984)

Les Quinze Joyes de mariage, ed. by Joan Crow (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969)

Les Quinze Joyes de mariage, ed. by Jean Rychner (Geneva: Droz, 1963)

Recueil des farces françaises inédites du XVe siècle, ed. by G. Cohen (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1949)

Recueil de poésies françoises des XVe et XVIe siècles, ed. by A. de Montaiglon, 13 vols (Paris: Jannet, 1855-78)

Recueil de sermons joyeux, ed. by Jelle Koopmans (Geneva: Droz, 1988)

Rychner, Jean and Albert Henry, *Le Testament Villon,* 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1974)

Schwob, Marcel, *Le Parnasse satyrique du quinzième siècle: anthologie de pièces libres* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969 [Paris: H Welter, 1905])

Straparola, Giovanni Francesco, *Les facétieuses nuits*, trans. by Jean Louveau and Pierre de Larivey, 2 vols (Paris: Jannet 1857)

Tardif, Guillaume, *Les Facecies de Poge: traduction du 'Liber facetiarum' de Poggio Bracciolini*, ed. by Frédéric Duval and Sandrine Hériché-Pradeau (Geneva: Droz, 2003)

Vega, Garcilaso de la, *Poesías castellanas completas*, ed. by Elias L. Rivers (Madrid: Castalia, 1996)

Villon, François, *Complete Poems*, ed. by Barbara N. Sargent-Baur (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994)

Villon, François, *Lais, Testament, Poésies Diverses avec Ballades en jargon*, ed. by Jean-Claude Mühlethaler (Paris: Champion, 2004)

Villon, François, *Œuvres*, ed. by Louis Thuasne, 3 vols (Paris: Picard, 1923)

Villon, François, *Poésies complètes,* ed. by Claude Thiry (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1991)

CRITICISM:

Aubailly, J.-C., *Le Monologue, le dialogue et la sottie: essai sur quelques genres dramatiques de la fin du Moyen Age et du début du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1976)

Azuela, C., 'Les métaphores érotiques des *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*: sexe et écriture', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 29 (2003), 35-51

Baker, Mary J., 'The Image of the Woman in Tales 26 and 99 of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*', *Le Moyen Français,* 24-25 (1989), 243-50

Beauchamp, P. A., 'Procédés et thèmes carnavalesques dans les *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*', *Le Moyen Français*, 1 (1977), 90-118

Birge Vitz, Evelyn, *The Crossroad of Intentions: A Study of Symbolic Expression in the Poetry of François Villon* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974)

Blakeslee, Merritt R., 'Le *Lais* et le *Testament* de François Villon: Essai de lecture freudienne', *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 5 (1982), 1-8

Blue, Walter, 'François Villon: Love's Sterile/Fertile Martyr', in *Poetics of Love in the Middle Ages: Text and Contexts*, ed. by Moshe Lazar and Norris J. Lacy (Fairfax: George Mason University Press, 1989), pp. 29-35

Bruskin Diner, Judith, 'Filling in and Fleshing out the Feminine Figure: Innovative Representations of Women in *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*', in *New Images of Medieval Women: Studies Toward a Cultural Anthropology*, ed. by Edelgard E. DuBruck (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), pp. 19-45

Burger, André, 'La Dure Prison de Meung', in *Studi in onore di Italo Siciliano*, ed. by Italo Siciliano (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1966) II, 149-51

Burger, André, *Lexique de la langue de Villon* (Geneva: Droz, 1957)

Champion, Pierre, *François Villon, sa vie et son temps*, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1933)

Cholakian, Rouben C., 'The (Un)naming Process in Villon's *Grand Testament*', *The French Review*, 66 (1992), 216-228

Creed, Barbara, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)

De Blieck, Edgar, '*Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles:* Text and Context', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2004)

Demarolle, Pierre, *L'esprit de Villon: étude de style* (Paris: Nizet, 1992)

Demarolle, Pierre, 'Sur l'interprétation de deux huitains de Villon: la Bulle et le Décret', *Le Moyen Age*, 76 (1970), 293-304

Denais, J., 'Le monologue et le sermon joyeux dans l'ancien théâtre français', *Revue d'Art dramatique*, 19 (1980), 193-202

Dérens, Jean and Jean Dufournet, eds., *Villon: passage sans fin* (Paris: Passage, 2005)

Deroy, Jean, *François Villon coquillard et auteur dramatique* (Paris: Nizet, 1977)

Dubuis, Roger, '*Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles' et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au Moyen Age* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1973)

Dufournet, Jean, 'Deux exemples de la méchanceté raffinée de Villon', *Romania*, 86 (1962), 375-86

— 'Le Bestiaire de Villon', in *Epopée animale, fable, fabliau: actes du IVe Colloque de la Société internationale renardienne, Evreux, 7-11 septembre 1981*, ed. by Gabriel Bianciotto and Michel Salvat (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), pp. 179-95

— 'La Génération de Louis XI: quelques aspects', *Le Moyen Age*, 98 (1992), 227-50

— *Nouvelles recherches sur Villon* (Paris: Champion, 1980)

— *Recherches sur le 'Testament' de François Villon*, 2 vols, 2nd rev. ed. (Paris: Sedes, 1973)

— 'Villon: Ambiguïté et Carnaval' in *Villon, hier et aujourd'hui : actes du Colloque pour le cinq-centième anniversaire de l'impression du 'Testament' de Villon, Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, 15-17 décembre 1989*, ed. by Jean Dérens, Jean Dufournet and Michael Freeman (Paris: Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, 1993), pp. 9-25

Dyer, Richard, 'Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up', in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 265-76

Everett, J., 'La langue figurée dans la nouvelle', in *Formation, codification, rayonnement d'un genre médiéval: la nouvelle: Actes du colloque international de Montréal*, ed. by M. Picone, G. Di Stefano and P. D. Stewart (Montreal: Plato Academic Press, 1983), pp. 224-36

Fein, David, *Displacements of Power: Readings from the 'Cent Nouvelles nouvelles'* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003)

— *François Villon and his Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989)

— *François Villon Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1997)

— *A Reading of Villon's 'Testament'* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1984)

Foehr-Janssens, Y., 'Pour une littérature du derrière – licence du corps féminin et stratégie du sens dans les trois premiers récits des *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*', in *Riens ne m'est seur que la chose incertaine: études sur l'art d'écrire au Moyen Âge: offertes à Eric Hicks par ses élèves, collègues, amies et amis,* ed. by Jean-Claude Mühlethaler and Denis Billotte (Geneva: Slatkine, 2001)

Fox, John, *The Poetry of Villon* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1962)

— *Villon: Poems* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1984)

Freeman, Michael, *François Villon in his Works: The Villain's Tale* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000)

Freeman, Michael and Jane H. M. Taylor, *Villon at Oxford: The Drama of the Text* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999)

Freeman Regalado, Nancy, 'Effet de réel, effet du réel: Representation and Reference in Villon's *Testament*', *Yale French Studies*, 70 (1986), 63-77

Gilman, S. L., *The Parodic Sermon in European Perspective: Aspects of Liturgical Parody from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1974)

Guiraud, Pierre, *Le Jargon de Villon ou le gai savoir de la Coquille* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968)

Guiraud, Pierre, *Le 'Testament' de Villon ou le gai savoir de la Basoche* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970)

Harold Brunvand, Jan, *The Choking Doberman and Other "New" Urban Legends* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986)

Heist, W. W., *Sermon Joyeux and Polemic: Two Sixteenth Century Applications of the Legend of the Fifteen Signs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968)

Hicks, Eric, *Le Débat sur 'Le Roman de la Rose'* (Paris: Champion, 1977)

Hunt, Tony, 'Villon's Last Erection' in *Villon at Oxford: The Drama of the Text*, ed. by Michael Freeman and Jane H.M. Taylor (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 150-8

Hunt, Tony, *Villon's Last Will: Language and Authority in the 'Testament'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)

Jernigan, Charles, 'Arma, Arme, Arm: The Literary Use of a Bawdy Pun in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance', *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 29 (1982), 99-116

Kline, Paul, *Fact and Fantasy in Freudian Theory* (Methuen: London, 1972)

Koopmans, Jelle, 'Groseilles et Vaucelles', in *Villon at Oxford: The Drama of the Text,* ed. by Michael Freeman and Jane H. M. Taylor (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 129-50

Koopmans, Jelle, 'Villon et Jacques Cardon', *French Studies*, 54/3 (2000), 277-86

Koopmans, Jelle and Paul Verhuyck, *Sermon joyeux et truanderie (Villon – Nemo – Ulespiègle* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987)

Krasprzyk, Krystyna, 'Les Quinze joies d'un mariage', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier, professeur à la Sorbonne,* ed. by Jean Frappier, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1970), pp. 499-508

LaGuardia, David, *The Iconography of Power* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999)

Lederer, Wolfgang, *The Fear of Women* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968)

Lepage, Yvan G., 'François Villon et l'homosexualité', in *Homosexual Themes in Literary Studies*, ed. by Wayne R. Dynes and Stephen Donaldson (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 203-23

Marino, Nancy F., *La serranilla española: notas para su historia e interpretación* (Potomac: Scripta Humanistica, 1987)

Martin, Thierry, *Villon: Ballades en argot homosexuel* (Paris: Editions Mille et une nuits, 1998)

Martineau-Génieys, Christine, 'L'homosexualité dans le *Lais* et le *Testament* de Villon', in *Conformité et déviances au Moyen Age: actes du deuxième colloque international de Montpellier, Université Paul-Valéry*, ed. by Marcel Faure (Montpellier: Association CRISIMA, 1995), pp. 235-251

Melhado White, Sarah, 'Sexual Language and Human Conflict in Old French *Fabliaux*', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24 (1982), 185-210

Mermier, Guy, 'La ruse féminine et la fonction morale des *Quinze Joyes de mariage*', *Romance Notes*, 15 (1973-4), 495-503

Mus, David (*olim* David Kuhn), *La Poétique de François Villon* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1992 [Paris: Armand Colin, 1967])

Nykrog, Per, 'Playing Games With Fiction: *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*, *Il Corbaccio*, *El Arcipreste di Talavera*', in *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics,* ed. by Leigh Arrathoon (Rochester, MI: Solaris, 1984), pp. 423-51

Partridge, Eric, *Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary & Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955)

Peebles, Rose Jeffries, *The Legend of Longinus in Ecclesiastical Tradition and in English Literature, and its Connection with the Grail* (Baltimore: Furst, 1911)

Pickens, Rupert T., 'The Concept of Woman in Villon's *Testament*', in *Medieval Studies in Honor of Robert White Linker*, ed. by Brian Dutton and others (Valencia: Editorial Castilia, 1973), pp. 163-76

Pierdominici, Luca, *La Bouche et le corps: Images littéraires du quinzième siècle français* (Paris: Champion, 2003)

Pinkernell, Gert, *François Villon et Charles d'Orléans (1457 à 1461): d'après les 'Poésies diverses', de Villon* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1992)

Pinkernell, Gert, 'Villon und Ythier Marchant: Zum Kommentar von *Lais* 81-88 und *Testament* 970-989', *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 91 (1975), 95-107

Planche, Alice, 'Corps de prince, corps de vilain: le lexique du corps humain dans les oeuvres de Charles d'Orléans et de Villon', in *L'image du corps humain dans la littérature et l'histoire médiévales* (Nice: Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, 1981), pp. 77-86

Santucci, Monique, 'Pour une interprétation nouvelle des *Quinze Joyes de mariage*', in *Le récit bref au Moyen Age: Actes du colloque des 27, 28 et 29 avril 1979*, ed. by D. Buschinger (Amiens: Université de Picardie, 1980), pp. 153-173

Söderhjelm, Werner, *La Nouvelle française au XV^e siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973)

Spitzer, Leo, 'Sur le v. 2015 du *Testament* de Villon', *Romania*, 65 (1939), 101-3

Taylor, Jane H. M., 'Grosse Margot and *Sotte Chanson*: François Villon's Art of Adaptation' in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition*, ed. by Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 139-154

Taylor, Jane H. M., *The Poetry of François Villon: Text and Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Taylor, S. M., 'Saints for Sinners: The Transitional Role of the XVth Century *Sermon Joyeux*', *Fifteenth Century Studies,* 8 (1983), 211-226

Taylor, Steven M., 'Wifely Wiles: Comic Unmasking in *Les Quinze Joyes de mariage*', in *New Images of Medieval Women: Studies Toward a Cultural Anthropology*, ed. by Edelgard E. DuBruck (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), pp. 287-302

Tripp, C. A., *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Free Press, 2004)

Uitti, Karl D., 'Villon's "Le Grand Testament" and the Poetics of Marginality', *Modern Philology*, 93 (1995), 139-160

Verhuyck, Paul, 'De la sottie à Villon: Comment ferrer une oie' in *Villon at Oxford: The Drama of the Text,* ed. by Michael Freeman and Jane H. M. Taylor (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 342-79

Warner, Marina, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and The Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Quartet, 1978)

Whinnom, Keith, *La poesía amatoria de la época de los Reyes Católicos* (Durham: University of Durham, Durham Modern Languages Series, 1981)

Willard, Charity Cannon, 'Women and Marriage Around 1400: Three Views', *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 17 (1990), 475-84

Williams, Alison and John Parkin, 'Feminine Wiles and Masculine Woes: Sexual Dynamics in *Les Quinze Joies de Mariage*', in *French Humour*, ed. by John Parkin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 21-37

THEORY:

Berger, Maurice and others, eds, *Constructing Masculinity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995)

Boswell, John, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980)

Bristow, Joseph, *Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997)

Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990)

Cowling, David, *Building the Text: Architecture as Metaphor in Late Medieval and Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)

Freud, Sigmund, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1949)

Gaunt, Simon, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Hayward, Susan, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996)

Huizinga, Johan, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. by F. Hopman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001)

Iser, Wolfgang, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978

Johnson, Leonard W., *Poets as Players: Theme and Variation in Late Medieval French Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990)

Kövecses, Zoltán, *Metaphor: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Lakoff, George and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989)

Mahony, Patrick, *Psychoanalysis and Discourse* (New York, London: Tavistock Publications, 1987)

Mulvey, Laura, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn 1975), 6-18

Power, Eileen, *Medieval Women*, ed. by M. M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975)

Rich, Adrienne, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*, (London: Virago, 1986), pp. 23-75.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)

Shahar, Shulamith, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Chaya Galai (London and New York: Methuen, 1983)

Spearing, A. C., *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

REFERENCE BOOKS:

Bidler, Rose M., *Dictionnaire érotique: ancien français, moyen français, Renaissance* (Montreal: Ceres, 2002)

Childers, Joseph and Gary Hentzi, *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995)

Di Stefano, Giuseppe, *Dictionnaire des locutions en moyen français* (Montreal: Ceres, 1991)

Di Stefano, Giuseppe, *Dictionnaire historique des locutions: ancien français – moyen français – Renaissance* (Montreal: Ceres, forthcoming)

Di Stefano, Giuseppe and Rose M. Bidler, *Toutes les herbes de la Saint-Jean: les locutions en moyen français* (Montreal: Ceres, 1993)

Esnault, Gaston, *Dictionnaire historique des argots français* (Paris: Larousse, 1965)

Greimas, A.J., and T.M. Keane, *Dictionnaire du moyen français: la Renaissance* (Paris: Larousse, 1992)

Hassell Jr, James W., *Middle French Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases* (Toronto: Pontifical Insitute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982)

Peckham, Robert D., *François Villon: A Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1990)

Rossi, Luciano, *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, Bibliographie des écrivains français, (Paris: Memini, forthcoming)

Sturm, Rudolf, *François Villon: Bibliographie und Materielien, 1489-1988*, 2 vols, (Munich: Saur, 1990)

Thiry, Claude, *François Villon,* Bibliographie des écrivains français (Paris: Memini, forthcoming)